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A HOME WEEKLY FOR WINTER NIGHTS AND SUMMER DAYS.

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SO NEAR—SO FAR.

BY JOHN GOSSIP.

I sang a song when summer days were waning,
A song of unrequited love complaining.
And this it was the winds taught me to say:
"Oh, Florestine! so near to-day—to-morrow so
far, far away!"

While thus my sorrow I sat voicing,
Young hearts around seemed all rejoicing;
Sung I unto my own, which once was gay:
"Oh, Florestine! so near to-day—to-morrow so
far, far away!"

I sung it when my love was near,
Yet sung so low she could not hear;
Nor ever heard, till parting, I did say:
"Oh, Florestine! so near to-day—to-morrow so
far, far away!"

'Twas then she caught the burden's meaning,
And then knew she my heart was waning;
For I had loved, and she—ah! nay:
"Oh, Florestine! so near to-day—to-morrow so
far, far away!"

This ye may learn from my refrain,
That one may love and love in vain,
And at the end he can but say:
"Oh, sweetest love! so near to-day—to-morrow
so far, far away!"

FERGUS FEARNAGHT; OR, Our New York Boys.

A STORY OF THE BY-WAYS AND THOROUGHFARES.

BY GEORGE L. AIKEN,

AUTHOR OF "FALSE FACES," "ROLL, THE
RECKLESS," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER IV.

RAGGED TERRY.

FERGUS remained on the curbstone watching the car until it disappeared in the distance. "He's a splendid fellow!" he murmured to himself. "His father must be awful rich. It's a nice thing to have a rich father; but I'll never have one now. I wonder who I belong to, anyway?"

This was a thought that had occurred to Fergus' mind very frequently of late. He had not reflected much about it when he first ran away from the almshouse to escape the petty tyranny exercised over him there, but as he grew in years and his struggle with the world became lighter and less exacting, he found himself cogitating over this subject at odd times.

This encounter with Clinton Stuyvesant brought the matter up more vividly to his mind than ever before. The poor, friendless boy, who had been kicked and cuffed and scoffed at by the world ever since he could remember, could but reflect that it would be a better condition in life to have a rich father and a comfortable home.

"Perhaps I've got a father somewhere—who knows?" Fergus asked himself, following up this train of reflection. "Or a mother?"

He shook his head doubtfully here. "Pears to me if a mother had a nice, likely boy, like I am, she wouldn't go back on him. Pears to me she wouldn't send him to the poorhouse, where they half starve a fellow, and beat him if he grumbles about it. When I get big enough I'll go back and whale that overseer."

Fergus doubled up his fist in a very decided manner as he uttered this boyish threat. But this revengeful feeling speedily passed away, and his thoughts went back to the subject of his parents again.

"I must belong to somebody," he mused, "as Clint Stuyvesant said—smart chap, Clint; no starved-up frills about him—and I'd like to find out who. Fleda says my father must have been a gentleman, and she's awful smart at guessing things. What she don't know ain't worth knowing. It would be kind of nice now to find a rich father; not but what I can do well enough for myself, but I'd like to be a young gentleman like Clint, and be somebody of consequence when I got to be a man; alderman of the Fourth Ward, or coroner, or deputy sheriff, or something of that sort."

It must be confessed that Fergus' aspirations were not of a very high order at this period of his life.

He had begun to move slowly up the Bowery, dodging the hurrying throng as he made these reflections, when he saw a pocket handkerchief lying on the sidewalk before him. He stooped quickly and picked it up.

Looking ahead of him he espied a well-dressed lady, and thinking that she had dropped the handkerchief he ran after her. Just as he broke into this run a cry of "Stop thief!" was uttered behind him. Fergus, in his anxiety to overtake the lady and restore her property to her did not heed this cry.

The surging crowd swept around him and hid her from his view. As he darted in and out in his efforts to overtake the lady, the cry was repeated and taken up by several voices, "Stop thief! Stop thief! Stop thief!"

Fergus was very naturally mistaken for the thief, and several hands were thrust forth to catch him, but he glided away from them with the suppleness of an eel; he was not long in recognizing the situation.

"By Jinks!" he muttered to himself, "they think I've stole the handkerchief, and they are after me. This will never do. Let her whistle for her handkerchief. She'll think I picked her pocket, just as like as not. Nobody believes poor people can be honest."

He thrust the handkerchief hurriedly into his pocket, stopped and joined in the hue and cry, bawling as lustily as any of them: "Stop thief! Stop thief!"



"If you says I cheats—come and see me, Cully!" cried the ragged manikin, shrilly.

Then, singling out a stout, stolid-faced Dutchman in the crowd, he shouted:

"There he is—that's him! Stop him!"

The Dutchman was instantly seized by the over zealous mob, and during the altercation that ensued, Fergus quietly walked away, turned into Bond street, and directed his progress toward Broadway.

"They can jug the Dutchman, if they want to," he told himself, with a chuckle, "but they can't catch me—I'm too wide awake for them! I'll take the handkerchief home and give it to Fleda. What's the use of a poor cove trying to be honest when everybody takes him for a thief?"

Having come to this conclusion, Fergus paused on the corner of Broadway, and leaning against the lamp-post, gazed at the stream of vehicles which rolled continuously down that busy thoroughfare.

Suddenly a scream burst from the open window of a private carriage, and Fergus, attracted by the sound, saw a woman's head thrust from the window, and her right arm was held toward him, the hand gesticulating in an agitated manner, and he heard her cry out:

"That is he—the boy—there!"

He could not mistake her action; she meant him, beyond a doubt. He cast one wild, startled glance at her, and muttered: "By Jinks! I'm in for it again!" turning and fled precipitately.

"Oh! stop—stop!" came after him, in an agonized cry, but Fergus only redoubled his speed.

The block between Broadway and the Bowery is but a short one, and before the driver could stop his horses and turn the carriage around into Bond street, the fleet-footed boy had disappeared.

Fergus was too familiar with the turns and windings of New York to be easily overtaken, and he knew that the moment he mingled with the ever-moving throng upon the Bowery he was safe; so he dashed along at all speed until he reached the corner, turned into the Bowery, and subsided into a walk.

"Phew!" he puffed, drawing a long breath. "Who put up that job on me, I wonder! That couldn't have been the woman that lost the handkerchief—she belonged over here, and the other was a Broadway big bug, and a real nobby one, too, riding in her own carriage, with a driver in livery—and such a handsome face. Oh, by Jinks! if the angels are any prettier than she is they must look stunning! But what did she want with me?"

Fergus pondered over this in a bewildered way. His brain was clear and acute, his bitter experience with the world had made it so, but this adventure puzzled him exceedingly.

It was utterly impossible that this woman in the carriage could have been the one who had dropped the handkerchief. A lady of her appearance would never have been walking in such a locality, or even admitting that some chance may have taken her there, she could not have been there at the time he had found the handkerchief, for when he saw the carriage it was rolling down Broadway, going south, and he had stood fully ten minutes upon the corner before it came along. Besides, if it was really the woman who had lost the handkerchief, how could she possibly know that he had found it?

This question, which he mentally put to himself, puzzled Fergus' brain excessively. He could not answer it; he could not understand the action of the lady at all.

He remembered, cogitating in a bewildered manner over the affair, that he had been attracted by the carriage, which was an unusually handsome one, drawn by a span of cream-colored horses, splendid looking animals—and the boy had a keen eye for a good horse, and was critical in its "fine points," having picked up the knowledge some way—and the harness was resplendent with silver trimmings, and the driver wore a stylish livery, and a cockade on the side of his hat that gave him quite a smart look.

From the horses and the driver Fergus' eyes had wandered naturally to the occupant of the carriage—a lady richly attired, in the prime of her fair womanhood. Her face attracted him with a kind of magnetism which he could not comprehend. His muttered words as he fled had told us the strange impression that her features made upon his mind; and it was while he was gazing at this face, in a dreamy kind of a way, and wondering what made his blood thrill so strangely in his veins at the sight of it, that her eyes fell upon him; then she evinced that singular agitation, starting from her seat, thrusting her head through the open window of the carriage, pointing him out and exclaiming vehemently:

"That is he—the boy—there!"

Sauntering along, with his hands thrust deeply into his trousers pockets, Fergus pondered over the matter.

"It just beats all!" he told himself. "I never did nothing to her—I know I never did; then what did she want to have me caught for? Guess she must have mistook me for somebody else. Lord, yes—that's it—what a nippy I was never to have thought of that before."

Fergus felt quite a relief of mind when he came to this conclusion; it was such a simple solution of the perplexing incident; and having thus settled it to his own satisfaction he straightway dismissed it from his mind.

His reflections upon this subject had so preoccupied his mind that he had reached the corner of Grand and Baxter streets almost unconsciously, but the turnings that led to his present home were so familiar to him that his feet took that direction almost of their own volition.

Clustered on the sidewalk in front of the dingy brick house, where he had found a shelter, and which was let in different apartments, like all the dwellings in the street, so that every house was a hive of humanity, was a group of noisy, ragged boys, engaged in a game of "marbles;" and the noisiest and raggedest of them all was a diminutive youngster, who could not have been over ten years of age, though his face was as sharp and shrewd-looking as that of a man of forty. Indeed, he looked like one of those "changing" children that we read of in Irish legends, where the body is that of an infant, but the face is that of a man.

No scarecrow in a farmer's field ever had more rags fluttering in the breeze than did this youngster. Looking at them you wondered how he ever got them on him, and having got them on, how he contrived to keep them there.

His principal garment was a coat, "a thing of shreds and patches." The collar reached above his ears, and the skirts reached down to his heels. The dexterity with which he could divest himself of this outer garment, and the facility with which he could assume it again, were feats that confused the mind of the beholder like the tricks of a skilled conjuror.

"There's Ragged Terry," commented Fergus, as he beheld the group. "He and his gang are playing marbles on our sidewalk again. Fleda will be after them presently."

Fergus chuckled to himself, paused, and watched the game. Presently a squabble arose among the boys, no uncommon occurrence even among better dressed boys than they were, and Ragged Terry was accused of cheating. He resented the accusation indignantly, whipped off his ragged coat, shedding it at his feet with surprising quickness, and revealing a ragged waistcoat, and the most dirty and dilapidated shirt-sleeves that the imagination can conceive, and offered to fight his accuser, throwing himself into a boxing attitude in a most ferociously ludicrous manner.

"If you says I cheats—come and see me, Cully!" cried the ragged manikin, shrilly.

But this invitation proved too belligerent for the other boy, though he was twice the size of Terry, and he admitted that he might have been mistaken, though his manner indicated that he did not think so, but that Terry's appeal to arms had forced him, to use a boyish phrase, "to back down."

"I thought you'd think better of it," said the triumphant Terry, and he prepared to resume his coat.

Watch him now as he picks it up from the sidewalk. There are as many holes in it as a cullender. How can he possibly get his arms into the sleeves? How can he tell where the arm-holes are among all those gaping rents? Look, he gives it a shake, makes a dive at it with his little head, the skirts describe a kind of somersault over his shoulders, his body writhes for a moment, and the skirts hang dangling at his heels. It is on. Ragged Terry is himself again.

The game is resumed, and more noisily than before; there is a perfect babble of oaths, shouts, and cries. Then a window in the third story is gently opened, and a small, curly black head is cautiously protruded. A pair of bright, black eyes survey the noisy group below, and then a tin kettle, of three quarts capacity, is reached forth and turned upside down, and the head and kettle disappear quickly within the window.

Swish-swash! down comes the water in a deluge on the boys. Just at that moment their heads were all together, for Ragged Terry was "knocking down" for a shot and a strong suspicion that he will cheat pervades his chums, for Terry's propensity is well-known to them, and none escape the extemporized shower-bath.

They hastily gather up their marbles and scamper over to the other sidewalk, where they cluster together, shake the drops from them, wondering where they came from, and swearing like pirates—and pirates and robbers they will undoubtedly grow up to be, and the trial of one of them, for the inevitable crime he must commit, will cost New York more than to take the whole of them, just as they are now, and educate them in some reform school.

"That's Fleda, and she has ducked them," cried Fergus.

Ragged Terry was about to take off his coat and defy some one to fight, but he desisted when he saw Fergus.

"Sides, Cullies!" he said. "There's bully Ferge, the Fearnaght."

CHAPTER V.
A SPRIGHTLY GIRL.

"Be off!" exclaimed Fergus. "You have

no business here—and you have been told so often enough."

"You be blowed!" cried Terry, defiantly.

"You don't own the street."

Terry, however, was careful to keep at a safe distance while he made this remark, watching Fergus keenly with his twinkling eyes, which were as sharp and as bright as those of a mouse.

Fergus made a feint to cross the street.

"Mizzle!" cried Terry, warningly. "He's a-comin' fur us!"

And the ragged crowd scuttled rapidly away, following the lead of Terry.

Fergus laughed as the boys scampered away, and then turned and entered the house. In the hall he met a girl holding a tin pail in her hand. She had just come down stairs.

"Hallo! Ferge!" she called out to him, in a shrill, clear voice. "Just come?"

"Yes."

"Did you see what I did?"

"Oh, yes."

"Didn't I duck 'em good?"

"You just did."

The girl broke into a merry laugh, the mirth coming as spontaneously from her lips as song from the throat of a bird.

"I knew I could make them scatter, and a little water won't hurt any of them," she said.

"I guess if that little ragamuffin Terry once had his face washed, good and clean, his own mother wouldn't know him—that is, if he has a mother," she added, with a reflective shake of the head.

"Hasn't he got a mother?" inquired Fergus, with sudden interest.

"Guess not—any way, I never heard of any."

She opened the door that led into the apartment on the ground floor, stepping down a step to enter it, and Fergus followed her, closing the door after him.

This apartment was the principal and largest one of the three occupied by Mrs. Nandrus, the girl's mother, who had taken Fergus to board. It was very scantily furnished, but was kept scrupulously clean, and it combined the offices of sitting-room and bed-chamber, for there was a bed in the further corner of the room, covered by a milk-white spread. Indeed, a general air of tidiness pervaded the room.

Though the carpet was of the commonest ingrain, not a speck of dirt could be detected upon its surface, and the little chintz sofa, and the table and chairs were free from dust.

The room, however, was not very cheerful, despite the care devoted to it. The floor was considerably below the level of the sidewalk. The two windows opened upon a little area two feet below the sidewalk and separated from it by an iron picket fence.

This gave the room a kind of dungeon look, gloomy and oppressive, until one became accustomed to it. Looking out to the street from the windows through the bars of the iron fence was like gazing through the barred window of a prison cell. But Fergus had been too thankful for the shelter he had found there in his hour of need to take any thought of its gloomy aspect.

Besides this girl had brightened up the place to his view wonderfully. She was as merry as a cricket, and as mercurial in her actions as a butterfly. It was she that had taken Fergus in, pleased at the sight of his fearless, handsome face, and persuaded her mother to give him accommodation.

She made a brother of him right away, and she assumed the position and mentorship of an elder sister despite the fact that she was five years younger than he.

And she was small for her age, for though she was twelve she was not much larger than most girls are at eight. She was decidedly of the elfin order, more than the mortal. A girlish sprite, with a strong effusion of quicksilver in her blood.

Though small, her frame was plump and well-proportioned, and her movements evinced a kind of airy, fairy grace and quickness more easily appreciated when seen than to be described. Her complexion was a quiet dark, but clear in its olive hue, with a ruddy blush on either round cheek which gave them a resemblance to plump red apples; she had a small mouth, garnished with little sharp white teeth that glistened like pearls in a ruby setting, whenever she laughed, and, as she was very much in the habit of doing so, these teeth formed a very conspicuous feature of her face.

Her eyes were small, as black as jet, with a diamond spark in the pupils, and her hair was also black, and curled in clustering ringlets over her bullet-shaped head.

It is not to be wondered at that Fergus had taken a great liking to this lightsome creature. The boy's experience of the world had been a bitter one. In the dark hour of his sorely-troubled life he had found his first friend in her.

Finding her in Mulberry street annoyed by three rude boys, he had, with the natural chivalry of his nature, constituted himself her champion. His interference was regarded with derision by the young rowdies, but when one was tripped up and sent sprawling, and another got a black eye, and the third a bloody nose, like Tom, the piper's son, they "went howling down the street," fully convinced that they had caught a Tartar.

In this way Fergus made the acquaintance of Fleda. He walked home with her—it was a home, despite its poverty, as Fergus found to his satisfaction. She questioned him concerning himself with more than her usual curiosity, and that trait was strongly developed in Fleda Nandrus' composition.

She found him very non-communicative at first, however—shy and suspicious even of her. He told her his name was Fergus. "Fergus what?" she questioned. He did not know; up country, where he came from, he had been called Fergus, but nothing else. Fleda considered this very strange, and so did Fergus then, though he had given it very little thought before.

"You ought to have another name," she told him. "Everybody has two names."

"I suppose so," answered Fergus, indifferently.

"If you don't know what your right name is, why don't you call yourself something else?" she suggested.

"Would you?"

"I would," she replied, decidedly.

Even in this first meeting she exerted an influence over his mind. The interest she took in him was a pleasant novelty to the friendless waif; no wonder he paid heed to any suggestion coming from her lips.

"I don't know what name to take," he said, after some deliberation.

"Don't you?"

"No; do you?"

Thus appealed to, Fleda set her wits at work, and they were very sharp ones, as will be demonstrated as we go on in the narration of the story before us.

"I'd have a nice name while I was about it," she said. "My first name is nice, but my last name is just awful."

"Is it? What is your name?"

"Fleda Nandrus."

"Fleda? That's a funny name. Why did they call you Fleda?"

"Because I was as lively as a flea when I was a little thing, I suppose," answered Fleda, with gravity; "leastways, mother says so."

"I think it's a good name."

"So do I; and the last name don't matter much, because I can change that one of these days, you know."

"Change it?" inquired Fergus, in some surprise.

"Of course," replied Fleda, complacently.

"How so?"

"When I get married," answered Fleda, demurely.

"Oh!" ejaculated Fergus. "I never thought of that."

"But you must select a good name, because you can't change it," she continued. "Let me see, what shall it be?" she added, reflectively.

"I'll take any name you've a mind to pick out," said Fergus, rather pleased to be spared the trouble of choosing for himself.

"You're awful brave!" cried Fleda, "and you ought to have some name that would tell people so—something that would sound nice."

"They called me a young 'dare devil' at the almshouse. How would that do?"

Fleda gave a little scream of dismay.

"Dare devil! Good Lord, no!" she cried. "That would never do. You are not afraid of anything, are you?"

Fergus gave his head a proud toss that floated his flaxen hair, something after the fashion of a lion throwing back his mane.

"Not much!" he answered. "I don't scare warts a cent. I stopped a runaway horse the other day, and the gentleman that owned him gave me a dollar, and told me I was a 'fearnaught,' whatever that is."

Fleda clasped her hands [delightedly together.

"That's it!" she exclaimed.

"What's it?" inquired Fergus, in bewilderment.

"The name!"

"Eh?"

"Fergus Fearnaught!"

"Who's he?"

"You. Oh, isn't it just splendid?"

And so she gave him his name—a name that he was destined to bear through long years of varied adventures and experiences such as fall to the lot of few mortals.

It is well that the "Book of Fate"—as it is called—can never be perused by human eyes, charlatans and fortune-tellers to the contrary, for few men would have the fortitude, knowing the inevitable suffering and sorrow they must undergo before they reach that haven of rest, the grave, to go on with life.

"You don't think Ragged Terry has a mother?" asked Fergus, following up their theme of conversation as he and Fleda entered the room.

"I never heard of his having any," she replied.

"He's a good deal like me, then."

Fleda tossed back her tangled curls and sniffed the air contemptuously with her small but well-shaped nose.

"Like you?" she cried. "Not a bit of it! Why you're a king to him! He's nothing but a snip!"

"He's a cute little cuss, though," returned Fergus. "You ought to see him begging in the Bowery, as I have. I tell you what, he's smart at it. That ragged coat of his just brings the pennies fast."

"I have no doubt of it; but what good do they do him? Why don't he save 'em, and buy himself a new coat?"

"He wouldn't get so many pennies in a new coat," answered Fergus, shrewdly. "He looks so ragged that people take pity on him. He's up to the dodge."

"He's up to all sorts of mischief, I know, but I'll stop his coming here, and howling in front of my windows, if I have to duck him every day in the week."

"That was a cute dodge of yours, Fleda," returned Fergus, laughing over the recollection of it. "They couldn't tell where the water came from."

"I'll warn it for 'em, and give it to 'em hot the next time!" cried Fleda.

Her animosity against the boys appeared to be very strong.

"Oh! I wouldn't do that," remonstrated Fergus. "I wouldn't scold the poor cusses."

"I'm sure they deserve it!"

"Pr'aps they do; but that would make 'em mad, and they'd throw stones and break all your windows."

Fleda felt the force of this remark; such a retaliation would be unpleasant.

"Pr'aps they might," she admitted. "But they are a dreadful nuisance. Oh! I do wish that we could move away from this neighborhood! There's nothing but beggars and thieves around here."

"But there's none in this house!" cried Fergus, quickly.

Fleda's black eyebrows were arched in a very expressive manner.

"Oh! isn't there?" she rejoined. "Don't you be too sure of that! What's that tall man, who lives on the upper floor, who's out all night, and home all day—John Jackson they say his name is, but who knows whether it is or not? Who knows anything about him, or what he does, anyway?"

"Why, you don't mean to say that he is—"

Fleda clasped her hand quickly over Fergus' mouth.

"Hush!" she cried, warningly. "He might be going through the hall and overhear us talk-

ing about him, and come in here to-night, when we are asleep, and wring both our necks for us."

"I would like to see him try it!" exclaimed Fergus, defiantly.

"Would you? Well, I wouldn't! You're brave enough, I know, but he's a big man, and you're only a boy. I got a glimpse at his face one evening as he was going out, and he looked as savage as a meat-ax. You'd better keep out of his way, I tell you. Why, he'd think no more of twisting your head off than if you were a poor, innocent chicken."

"He'll find me a tough chicken, if he troubles me!" cried Fergus, stoutly. "I ain't afraid of any man's black looks. But, never mind him; he won't trouble us if we don't trouble him. Where's your mother?"

"This is one of her days out, and she hasn't got home yet. You didn't come home for any dinner. Where have you been all day?"

"Down by Cortlandt ferry."

"Did you get any jobs?" inquired Fleda, with interest.

"Yes, two."

"How much did you earn?"

"Fifty cents."

"Oh, my! but you have been lucky to-day!" she exclaimed, delightedly.

"I just have. I carried a valise for a gentleman up to French's Hotel, and he gave me a sandwich he got coming on the train and didn't eat, and that made my dinner; and when I got to the hotel there was a gent just ready to go to the ferry, and he had a carpet-bag he wanted carried, and so I out it both ways—got a quarter from each. So I let the boys black my boots, just to show how flush I was."

"Lord, what extravagance! Your pride will be the ruin of you yet, Fergus."

She shook the forefinger of her right hand at him, reprovingly.

CHAPTER VI.

FLEDA'S BRIGHT IDEA.

FERGUS laughed at Fleda's reproof.

"Guess not," he returned, lightly. "I like to spread myself a little when I get a chance. What's the use of being a fellow unless you are some of a fellow? Ah, wouldn't I like to be as well off as Clint Stuyvesant! He's the boy that can put on the frills, and starch 'em up to the nines, too!"

Fleda opened her bright black eyes widely at this eulogistic speech.

"Clint Stuyvesant?" she cried. "Why, who's he? I never heard you speak of him before."

Fergus laughed again. The perplexed look on the little maiden's face pleased him highly.

"Guess not, for I never saw him until to-day," he answered. "It was a regular muss he and I had with one of those macaroni chaps—padrones they call 'em—that send the little Etyalian boys out to fiddle in the streets."

"Why, how was that?"

This question led Fergus to explain how he had made the acquaintance of that scion of the Knickerbockers who bore the sounding and time-honored names of Clinton De Witt Stuyvesant.

Fleda shook her young head gravely as she listened to Fergus' account of his adventure. It did not appear so funny to her as it did to him.

"You'll get killed yet, Fergus, see if you don't!" she exclaimed.

"Not a bit of it. What's the use of living if you don't have some sport?" he returned.

Then he broke into a song, which was popular among the boys, singing a snatch of it with surprising sweetness and melody:

"So let the wide world wag as it will,
I'll be gay and happy still;
Gay and happy—gay and happy—
I'll be gay and happy still!"

Fleda found this gayety infectious, and joined in the chorus with a will. Then they indulged in a little dance together, until Fleda got tired and sunk breathlessly into the old rocking-chair.

"Oh! what a boy you are, Fergus!" she cried, as soon as she got breath enough back to make the remark.

"And what a girl you are!" he returned.

"Then there's a pair of us!"

"And we ought to make something out of this 'wide world,' as the song says."

"We will," she answered, springing to her feet with animation. "I have been thinking of it for some time."

"You have?" questioned Fergus, with interest. "What is it?"

"I'll tell you. I don't want to have to earn my living the way mother does—it's awful hard to do washing—you know how tired she is when she comes home after a day's washing?"

"Yes; and I've often wished I could help her in some way; but a young fellow like me can't do much, you know."

"I think we could do something—you and I together, Fergus."

"What?"

"How much money have you got left?"

"Forty cents. Here it is." He thrust his hand into his pocket. "Oh, by jinks! I've forgot all about that. See here, Fleda, I had got a present for you."

He drew forth the handkerchief and exhibited it to her as he spoke.

She looked at it in a very suspicious manner.

"Oh, my! what a nice handkerchief!" she exclaimed. "But, oh, Fergus, I hope you didn't steal it!"

Fergus' face became crimson at the question.

"Steal it!" he cried. "Did you ever know me to steal anything yet?"

"No, I never did; and I hope you never will!"

"Guess not. I found it."

Fleda breathed a sigh of relief.

"Found it?" she said.

"Yes, in the Bowery; I thought I saw the lady who dropped it, and when I ran after her, to give it to her, somebody behind me sung out 'Stop thief,' and I had to cut my lucky. I knew they'd take me for a thief, anyhow, if they caught me, and so I dusted out of the crowd, lively. They don't give a poor chap a show if anything bad is brought against him."

"But couldn't you find the lady, afterward?"

"No; they kicked up such a rumpus around me that I lost sight of her. And I felt a little mad, too, to think they should take me for a thief, when I've always tried to be honest; and when I've been half-starved, and many a time, I've found it pretty hard to keep my hands off other people's property, I can tell you."

"Yes, I know; it's awful trying. But I wish you had found the lady."

"So I would if they had let me alone. But I wasn't going to be took up for a thief when I knew I wasn't one."

"Of course not," said Fleda, sympathetically.

"Besides, finding's having, you know."

"Well, yes, I suppose it is," Fleda admitted, slowly, as if some little doubt upon the subject lingered in her mind.

"You'll take the handkerchief?"

"I suppose I may as well," answered Fleda, receiving the gift, and examining it critically. "Well, it isn't such a great affair, after all," she continued, and her nose gave that peculiar arch upward that was so expressive with her. "You could buy any quantity of them for twenty cents apiece. I've seen them marked for that hanging out in the Bowery and Grand street."

"Then it couldn't have belonged to her," cried Fergus, quickly.

"Her—the lady?"

"Not that lady—but another one."

"What lady?"

"Such a beautiful one! oh, by jinks! I tell you, she was just prime—elegant—immense! Riding in her own carriage, with a driver in a livery. One of the big bugs—something like Clint Stuyvesant's mother, I guess."

Fleda stared at him, surprisedly.

"What in the world are you talking about?" she cried.

"The lady in her carriage, on Broadway."

"What about her?"

Fergus described the incident to her.

"Don't you think it was the woman that dropped the handkerchief?" Fleda inquired, when he had finished.

"I'm sure it wasn't—it couldn't have been, no way," he replied, decidedly.

"Then why did she shout at you?"

"That's what gets away with me. I can't understand it at all."

"It gets away with me, too, for I can't understand it, either. 'Pears to me that you have had a pretty lively day of it."

"I just have. Now tell me why you wanted to know how much money I had?"

"Wait until I start the fire and put the tea-kettle on. Mother will be home in about an hour, now, and I must have supper ready for her by the time she comes."

"All right," cried Fergus, and then he began to sing:

"Polly put the kettle on, Polly put the kettle on,
And we'll all take tea!"

Fleda, kneeling before the little square stove and arranging her kindlings, looked up admiringly at the boy.

"Oh, my, Fergus! but you do just sing splendid! Where did you learn?"

Fergus laughed gleefully.

"I never learnt anywhere," he answered.

"It just comes to me naturally, as it does to the birds. Why, you can sing as well as I can, and how did you learn?"

"Mother learned me when I was a baby; leastways I picked it up from hearing her."

Fergus' sunny face clouded.

"I never had any mother to sing to me," he said.

"You can't remember your mother?"

"No," answered Fergus, with a reflective shake of the head. "'Pears to me that I never had any."

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Fleda, laughingly. "That couldn't be so, you know. There, the fire's going; now wait till I fill the tea-kettle and then I'll tell you my idea."

"Is it a bright one?"

"It's been rubbing in my head long enough to make it bright!" rejoined Fleda.

Having got her household duties in proper trim, Fleda assumed a gravity befitting the importance of her subject, and thus began:

"You'd never guess, if you was to keep on for ever so long, what I have been thinking about lately."

"I suppose not; so fire away and tell us what it is."

"I have been thinking that I would like to do something to earn my own living."

"Show! 'pears to me that you do enough. Why, don't you do all the housework while your mother goes out to wash?"

"Of course I do that, but Lord! how long does that take? I have lots of time besides. I want to do something that will bring in the money."

"Yes, that's what we are all after. Every fellow is on the make—I am myself."

"But some days you don't make anything."

"That's so."

"You depend on what odd jobs you can pick up; now, wouldn't it be much better if you had a regular business?"

Fergus opened his eyes at this.

"A regular business?" he cried. "What kind of a regular business?"

"A peanut stand," answered Fleda, with the air of one achieving a triumph.

"A peanut stand?" echoed Fergus.

"Yes; I've heard mother say that lots of old women get their living that way," continued Fleda, with enthusiasm.

Fergus did not share in this enthusiasm.

"There's lots of 'em, I know," he said, "down the Bowery and around the City Hall, but I don't know how much they make."

"But they must make something or they wouldn't keep at it," urged Fleda.

Fergus felt the force of this argument.

"That's so," he admitted.

Fleda was encouraged by this admission.

"Don't you think it is a good idea?" she asked.

"It might be," he replied, a little dubiously. "Where could you start it?"

"On the corner of Grand street, on this side of the way. I've had my eye on that corner for some time," rejoined Fleda, vivaciously. "I can take that old table in the corner there, mother can spare it, and the chair without a back, that I do my washing on. I can start small in the first place, you know."

"I'm afraid you'll have to—forty cents won't go far in laying in a stock. Don't you intend to sell anything but peanuts?"

"Oh, yes, candy, cakes and apples!"

Fergus shook his head discouragingly.

"You can't do it on forty cents, Fleda," he said.

"Can't I?" she cried, disappointedly.

"I'm afraid not. Guess you'll have to wait until I make another raise. 'Pears to me you ought to have a dollar at least to begin on."

"Do you think so?"

"I do; it's no use beginning unless you can make something of a splash at the start."

Fleda's bright face assumed a blank look.

"I suppose not," she said, slowly; "but I'd like to try—'pears to me I would do well."

Fergus nodded his head in confirmation of this.

"You're smart enough to do well at almost anything," he replied, "and I'm bound to stake you just as soon as I can raise the wind."

"I know you will," she rejoined, hopefully.

He was silent for a moment, and then he asked:

"Couldn't you get some money from your mother?"

"No, Fergus," she answered, quickly; "and what's more, I don't want to. I wouldn't ask her for the world. No, I want to do it without her help—it must be done by you and I alone, Fergus, or not at all."

"All right! then we'll do it. I'll start out

bright and early to-morrow morning, and hunt up jobs. I'll raise the money somehow. Oh! by jinks! there's one way I've just thought of."

"What is that?" she inquired, eagerly.

"I might get it from Clint Stuyvesant."

"Do you think you could?"

"Why not? He must have loads of money! Why, a dollar to me ain't more than a five-cent piece to him. I'll ask him to lend it to me, and I'll bet he will."

"Well, there would be no harm in asking him; he can't more than refuse, and we could soon pay it back to him."

"Of course. I'll hunt him up to-morrow. And now—Hullo! Who's that, I wonder?"

This inquiry was caused by a loud knock at the door of the sitting-room.

"Some poddler," answered Fleda. "Go and send him away."

Fergus went to the door of the sitting-room, opened it, and found Effingham H. Pickles standing in the hall in front of it, and this astute lawyer grinned at him in a most affable manner.

"Hallo, Pickles!" exclaimed Fergus, in great surprise.

"Mr. Pickles, if you please—there's a handle to my name," said the lawyer; and he crowded Fergus back into the room and closed the door.

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they are not themselves at all, but somebody else."

"May I ask the name of the gentleman whom I have the honor to resemble? I hardly think, Miss Lawless, we will turn out to be relatives, as I have not one in the wide world," said Captain Reginald, with something like a cloud settling on his dark face.

"My name is Raymond Germaine," said Ray, coldly.

"Germaine!" exclaimed the smuggler, starting suddenly and paling slightly, "did you say Germaine?"

"Yes, sir; what is there extraordinary in that?" asked Ray, who still encircled Pet. Captain Reginald did not reply, but paced abruptly up and down the floor for a few moments. All were gazing at him in surprise; but there was fierce suspicion in the dusky depths of Marguerite's black eyes.

He came back at last, and resuming his former posture, said, but no longer in his cold, sarcastic tone:

"I once knew a person of that name, and its utterance recalled strange memories. It is not a very common name here—may I ask if you belong to this place?"

"No; I am English by birth, but I have lived here since a child."

"English!"

He started wildly again, and this time looked at the young man in a sort of terror.

"Yes—or rather, no; for though born in England, I am not English. I come of another race."

The fixed glance of the smuggler's eyes grew each moment more intense, his dark face paled and paled, until, contrasting with his jet-black hair and beard, it looked ghastly. His breath came quick and short as he almost gasped:

"And that race is—"

"The gipsy! Yes, I am of the degraded gipsy race," exclaimed Ray, with a sort of fierce pride, as though he dared and defied the world to despise him for that.

The smuggler-captain reeled as though some one had struck him a blow, and grasping Ray by the arm, he exclaimed, in a low, husky whisper:

"Tell me who brought you here. You were a child, you say, when you left England—who had charge of you?"

"My grandmother—a gipsy! What in the name of heaven, sir, is all this to you?" exclaimed Ray, like the rest completely astounded by this strange emotion.

"Her name!" said the outlaw, hoarsely, unheeding his question and the wonder of the rest.

"Among her tribe she was known as the gipsy-queen, Ketura."

"Just God!" exclaimed the smuggler-chief, as his grasp relaxed and with a face perfectly colorless, he stood like one suddenly turned to stone.

"Sir, what under heaven is the meaning of this?" said the bewildered Ray, while the rest looked on almost speechless with astonishment.

There was no reply. The outlaw had leaned his arm on a sort of mantel, and, with his head dropped upon it, stood like one stunned by some mighty blow. All were white and mute with wonder.

He lifted his head at last, and they started to behold its dreadful ghastliness. His eyes for some moments were fixed in a long, inexplicable gaze on the surprised face of Ray, then, in the same, low, hoarse tone, he asked:

"And she, your grandmother—does she still live?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In Old Barrens Cottage; but she is a helpless paralytic."

"So near, so near! and I never knew it. Great Heaven! how wonderful is thy dispensation!" he groaned.

"Is it possible you knew her?" asked the bewildered Ray.

"Yes, I knew her," he replied, slowly.

"Tell me, did she ever speak to you of your father?"

Ray's brow darkened, and his eyes filled with a dusky fire.

"She did—often. My father was drowned! He was branded, tried, convicted, and condemned for the guilt of another. His day of retribution is to come yet! Enough of this—I cannot understand what possible interest all this can have for you."

"You will soon learn. Come with me; Miss Lawless, remain with my wife until my return. This way, young man," said the outlaw, turning to the inner apartment and motioning the other to precede him.

The astonished Ray did so, and the curtain fell between the wonder-struck assembly outside and the twain within.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE OUTLAW'S STORY.

"They did not know how hate can burn in hearts once changed from soft to stern, Nor all the false and fatal zeal The convert of revenge can feel."—BYRON.

"Be seated," said the outlaw, with a wave of his hand.

Silent and wondering, Ray obeyed.

His strange companion walked across the room, and for some moments stood with knit brows and downcast eyes, like one absorbed in painful thought. Then he began pacing up and down, while Ray watched him, inwardly wondering whether this half-smuggler, half-pirate captain was quite right in his mind.

He stopped, at last, in his quick, excited walk as rapidly as he had commenced, and facing round to where Ray sat, demanded:

"Why did my—this gipsy, Ketura, leave England?"

"I do not know—she never told me," replied Ray.

"Old Earl De Courcy died shortly after I, her son, left England—perhaps she was instrumental in his death and was obliged to fly."

"Of that I know nothing," said Ray, impatiently. "What has all this to do with the revelations you are to make?"

"Not much, perhaps; but I wish my question answered. You say she resides in Old Barrens cottage?"

"Yes."

"You live there too, with her, of course?"

"Yes."

"If she is, as you say, a helpless paralytic, how has she contrived to support and educate you—for I perceive you are educated?"

"It was not she who did it. I am indebted for my education to the kindness of an old gentleman who resides near us," said Ray, flushing and biting his lip till it was bloodless.

"Who attends to her now, in her helplessness?"

"Erminie and her servant."

"Erminie who? Oh, I remember; Miss Lawless spoke of some Erminie Germaine, who was to have been brought here instead of her. Who is this Erminie?"

"I cannot tell. My grandmother brought us from England together—she was a mere infant, then."

"Perhaps she is your sister?"

"No; her very looks forbid such a supposition. That there is no gipsy blood in her veins, I am confident."

"And gipsy Ketura brought her from England? Strange—strange! Who can she be?" said the outlaw, musingly. "She has often spoken to you of the De Courcy family, no doubt?"

"Yes, often."

"Did she tell you Lord Ernest Villiers married Lady Maude Percy?"

"She did."

"Do you know if they had any children?"

"I do not know."

"She never told you?"

"Never," said Ray, wondering where this "Catechism of Perseverance" was to end.

"Strange, strange—very strange!" said the outlaw, pacing up and down, with brows knit in deep thought. "And so you are determined to avenge the wrongs of your father, young man?" he said, after a pause, stopping before him again.

"Yes. Heaven helping me, I will!" exclaimed Ray, fiercely.

"Heaven!" said the outlaw, with his old sneer. "It is the first time I ever heard Heaven aided revenge; Satan helping you, you mean. And how is this revenge to be accomplished?"

"Time will tell," said Ray, impatiently.

"It cannot concern you in any way, Captain Reginald; and on this subject you need ask me no more questions, for I will not answer them."

"As you please," said he, with a strange smile. "You have inherited the fiery, passionate spirit of your race, I see. Your father is, you say, drowned?"

"Yes—yes! To what end are all these questions?"

"Patience, Mr. Germaine; I will come to that presently. Did your grandmother ever speak to you of your mother?"

"Very little," said Ray, in a softer tone.

"She told me she never saw her, but that she was a lady of rank. That, however, I am inclined to doubt."

"And why?"

"Because my father was a gipsy. No lady of rank, knowing it, would have anything to do with one of his class. Proud England's proud daughters would not mate with despised gipsies."

A streak of fiery red darted for a moment across the dark face of Captain Reginald, and then passed away, leaving it whiter than before.

"Love levels all distinctions, young sir," he said, haughtily. "If she loved him would not that be sufficient to break through all the cobweb barriers of rank? Have not all social ties been proven, thousands of times, to be more flimsy than paper walls before the irresistible whirlwind of human love and passion?"

Ray thought of Pet, and his dark cheek flushed slightly. What a convenient belief this would be, dared he adopt it! He loved her, and thrilling through his heart came the conviction that she loved him. Would she, too, break down these "paper walls" for his sake? Would she give up all the world for him, as thousands had done before, according to this strange man's story?

"Your mother was a lady of rank—is a lady of rank, for she still lives!" were the next words, spoken rapidly and excitedly, that aroused him from his dangerous reverie.

"My mother lives?" exclaimed Ray, springing to his feet.

"Yes."

"Great Heaven! Where?"

"In England, most probably."

"My mother lives! Can it be possible? Who is she? What is her name?" demanded Ray, like one beside himself.

"Lady Maude Villiers, Countess De Courcy," exclaimed the outlaw, while his dark, fierce eyes blazed.

Ray stood for an instant paralyzed; then an expression of anger and utter incredulity flashed his face and flashed from his eyes.

"My mother the Countess De Courcy?" he said, scornfully. "Do you take me for a fool, Captain Reginald?"

"Young man, before high Heaven I swear I speak the truth!" said the outlaw, solemnly.

"Did Ketura tell you the manner in which your father's marriage was brought about?"

"That he inveigled my mother into it by some unlawful means? Yes; she told me that. But, good heavens! the idea of it being Lady Maude Percy! Oh, it is absurd, ridiculous, incredible, impossible!" exclaimed Ray, vehemently.

"It is the truth! Reginald Germaine, look me in the face, and see if I am not speaking the truth."

Yes; no one could look in those dark, solemn eyes and doubt his words.

Stunned, giddy, bewildered, Ray dropped into his seat, feeling as if the room was whirling round him.

"And you—who, in Heaven's name, are you, that know all this?" he passionately asked.

"That I will tell you presently. Suffice it to say that I do know that I am speaking the truth."

"Angels in heaven! the Countess De Courcy my mother? From whom did you learn this?"

"From your father."

"My father is dead."

"Your father is not."

"What?"

"Your father is not dead!"

"Sir, you are either mad or mocking me!" exclaimed Ray, springing fiercely to his feet.

"Young man, I am neither."

"My father was drowned on his way to Van Diemen's Land."

"Your father was not."

"Great heavens, am I sane or mad?" exclaimed Ray, in a loud, thrilling tone. "Man, demon, devil! whoever you are, was not the transport wrecked on her way from England?"

"She was."

"And all on board lost?"

"No."

"No?"

"No; I repeat it. All were lost but two—your father was one of these."

"Heaven of heavens! And where is my father now?"

"That, too, you will learn anon. If you please, we will take things in the order of their occurring. Listen, now. Sit down and be calm; getting excited will do no good, and only retard matters. The transport struck a sunken reef and was wrecked one stormy night. Your father and one sailor clung to a spar until daylight. By that time all the rest had disappeared—were engulfed in the ocean and perished. Captain, sailors, convicts and all were equal, at last, in the boundless sea. Before noon the next day your father and the sailor were seen and picked up by a passing vessel."

"Were you that sailor?"

"Patience, my dear sir," said Captain Reginald, with a slight smile: "who I was does not matter just now. The ship was a merchantman, bound to a far-distant port. They took us with them, and over a year elapsed before our sails filled for 'Merrie England' again. We were in the South Seas—then, as now, infested with pirates; and we never reached our island-home. For one day we were chased, overtaken, attacked and defeated by a pirate, and more than half our number found graves in the wide ocean, where many a brave heart had grown cold before, and will while the great sea rolls."

"We?" broke in Ray at this point, fixing his eyes piercingly on the other's face—"we? Then you were the sailor saved with my father?"

Again that fleeting, quickly-fading, inexplicable smile flickered for an instant round the lips of the outlaw, as he said:

"Hasty and impatient yet. You must learn that great Christian virtue, patience, Mr. Germaine; one cannot well get through the world without it. Whether I was the sailor in question, or not, does not matter; suffice it to say, I was on board the ship when she was mastered by the pirates. They were short of hands, and the captain very graciously offered their lives to those that remained, on condition of their taking an oath of allegiance to him, and becoming rovers and free lords of the high seas. One or two honest souls preferred the red maws of hungry sharks who went swimming round the ships, casting longing eyes up at us, asking, as plainly as looks could speak, for another mouthful of an old salt. They were gratified, too; for three of us good, brave, warm-hearted fellows as ever climbed the rigging walked the plank that hour, and found their graves in the capacious stomachs of the ravenous devils of sharks. Poor fellows! if there is such a place as heaven they went there straight; for heaven is as easily reached by water as land. I suppose it doesn't matter whether people are conveyed to it in canvas shrouds or inside of sharks."

"Very true," said Ray; "and you joined the pirates to aid my father?"

"Yes, we joined them; I was reckless and so was he; we did not care a fig whether we cruised under the black flag or the red cross of St. George. Life was not of much value to him for its own sake, but he had to live for sundry notions—revenge, I fancy, being the strongest. Then he had a child living—you, Master Raymond; and though considerable of a devil himself, he had some human feeling left, and the only white spot in his soul was his love for you, for his mother, and for Lady Maude Percy. For he loved her then, loves her still, and will while life remains for him."

"And yet she scorned him," said Ray, with flashing eyes and dilating nostrils.

"Yes, she scorned him," said the outlaw, "no one else could have done it and live. But he loved her, and though he had resolved never to see her more, yet her memory and that of her child were the only bright spots remaining in his darkened life."

"Well, Mr. Germaine, he sailed along with the pirates. They were a motley assembly, that crew—men from every nation, whom crime, wrong, revenge, hatred, or any other dark, dreadful cause had driven together here to wage eternal war against the world they hated, and find their only delight in scenes of blood, pillage and murder. There were French, Spanish, Italians, English, Corsicans, and Heaven knows what besides, all jabbering together there—raising the most infernal commotion sometimes, when they got drinking and fighting, that ever shamed Babel. The discipline was pretty strict, about as strict as it could be by any possibility be among such a gang, but they would break out at times, and then the diabolical regions themselves might have found it hard to raise such scenes as ensued. There were worse crimes than murder committed, sometimes, by these human fiends: your father never took part in them, though; the memory of the past kept him from that. Standing by myself, sometimes, after witnessing things that would make your blood curdle, I used to wonder if there was a deep enough pit in hell for these fellows. When I was young I used to believe in such a place. Mr. Germaine, no doubt you do now; but somehow I got over that and sundry other pleasant beliefs of late years. Though, whenever I think of what I saw and heard on board of that cursed floating pandemonium, I wish, from the bottom of my soul, there was one to grill them alive for their deeds in the flesh."

"Did my father ever take part in these horrible scenes?" asked Ray, with a slight shudder.

"No, never!" replied the outlaw, emphatically; "your father had been a gentleman once, and his whole nature revolted against this brutality. No, he never joined these fearful revels, but he fought like the very fiend himself in open warfare, especially against the English ships. When they were attacked he was worth the whole pirate crew together. He fought, and cut, and clove, and slashed them, like the devil and all his angels. Burning and smarting still under the sense of his mighty wrongs and degradations, he seemed determined to wipe out all his sufferings in their blood. Many an English heart grew cold in death to atone for the wrong one of their countrymen had done him. He had vowed vengeance against the whole nation, and I doubt whether St. Senanus himself kept a vow more religiously both in letter and spirit."

"Well, Mr. Germaine, we cruised along with these sea-wolves for some four or five months, and kept on at our old trade of throat-cutting, plank-walking, scuttling, sinking and burning ships. Sometimes, to vary the amusement, and breathe a spell, we used to go ashore and raise old Nick generally among the peaceable inhabitants of various sea-port towns and cities. These places very soon got too hot to hold us, and we never ventured back to the same place twice; for some of the men, getting tender-hearted at times, would take a fancy to the pretty wives and daughters of the good citizens, and carry off two or three of them for the benefit of sea-air. Of course there always was the devil to pay when these little escapades were found out, and it was like running our heads into a hornet's-nest to go back. Your father wished to go to England and see after you, I fancy, but there was no opportunity. He managed to make his escape, however, after a long time; gave the high sea-wolves leg bail one moonlight night, and was off. He reached England in safety, and there, the first news he had was his own death, and the marriage of Lady Maude Percy to the son of his enemy, Lord Ernest Villiers."

"The news nearly drove him mad, for his love for that beautiful lady amounted to frenzy. His intentions had been to seek you out; but when he heard of that marriage he fled from England as if the old demon was after him, and never rested till he reached the place where he knew he was most likely to meet his old friends, the pirates, again."

"Well, he found them, gave some plausible reason for his absence, and was admitted among

that happy band of Christian brothers once more. He reached them just in the nick of time, too; for their commander was dead, and the whole crew were plunged in deepest affliction about it, as they were never likely to find another who could kill, slay, burn, and murder all before him, and send insubordinate sailors to kingdom come, with a rap of a marlin-spike, as neatly as he could. Your father had, from the first, been an immense favorite with them, and had obtained that powerful ascendancy over them that men of refined and strong minds always possess over coarse, brute natures; and besides, he had the amiable qualities of his lamented and accomplished predecessor in a very high degree. Therefore, no sooner did he arrive than he was unanimously, and with one accord, elected to the vacant command, and stood in the shoes of the never-to-be-sufficiently-mourned-for Captain Diago, who, having served his Satanic Majesty like a faithful servant for five-and-twenty years in this whirligig world, went to aid him in keeping the Kingdom Infernal in order, with five ounces of lead through his skull."

"Well, Mr. Germaine, under the command of your worthy father, who, by the way, dropped his *alias* of Germaine when he first joined the pirates, the 'Diable Rouge,' as we called, very appropriately, our ship, did a flourishing business, and sunk more goodly vessels belonging to their various Christian Majesties than all the other gay crafts sailing under the black flag at the time. He did some good, too, among his own crew—put a stop to all their not-easily-to-be-told excesses, of more kinds than one, and let them know they had found their master at last. They were inclined to rebel, and did rebel at first; but he very coolly took out a brace of pistols and shot two of the ringleaders of the mutiny dead; and then, in a speech much shorter than sweet, gave them to understand that every symptom of insubordination would, in the future, be put a stop to in the same gentle and fatherly way. Well, Mr. Germaine, would you believe it, instead of flying into a rage at this, and kicking up a rumpus, they immediately conceived an immense respect for him, and from that day no Caliph Haroun Alraschid ever reigned it more royally over his bastinadoed subjects than did Captain Re—your father, on board the 'Red Devil.' On board a French privateer, that we sent to Davy Jones' one night, we found a lot of ladies; and after sending their masculine friends to another, and it is to be hoped a better world, we transferred the fair portion of the cargo to our own ship. It was nothing unusual for us to take ladies in this way; but since your father took command they were always well and respectfully treated, and landed at the first port we touched, well supplied with money, and left to make the best of their way home. Therefore, our having three or four of the dear creatures on board now would not have been worthy of notice, had not one of them, a most beautiful French girl, and a daughter of a great magnate of the land—a marquis de something—took it into her head to fall in love with our dare-devil of a captain; and when the ship arrived at the place where the rest were to be landed, mademoiselle absolutely 'put her foot down,' to use a common expression, and flatly refused to leave him. In vain he expostulated: told her he did not love her; that the life he led was too dangerous for her to think of sharing; that his life was never safe for two consecutive minutes; that she would be wretched to her as if he had been the greatest old anchorite that ever looked upon the adorable sex as a special invention of Satan—the whole thing was the old story of St. Revere and Cathleen over again. Mademoiselle wouldn't listen to reason, and determined to have him at any price. Our moral young captain hesitated at first; but she was young, beautiful, 'rounded and ripe,' and he was only frail flesh and blood like the rest of us; and the result of all her tears and pleadings was, that one evening they both went on shore together, and perpetrated downright matrimony, in free and easy defiance of all the statutes and by-laws against bigamy that ever were made. Perhaps he thought he had made enough miserable for life, and that there might be some merit, after all, in making this infuriated young creature happy. It is really wonderful how girls, all the world over, will cling to the most undesirable set of men, black-legs, pugilists, loafers, all sorts of outlawed people, and give the cold shoulder to sensible, straight-forward, every day Christians. You may talk to them till your tongue aches, and show them the evil of their ways in the most glaring colors, their reply will be: 'I love him,' and after that you might as well try to drain the Atlantic with a teaspoon as to make them give him up; they'll cling to him like a barnacle to the bottom of an old ship. But hold on! it won't do to indulge in a train of moral reflections; for if I begin I won't know when to stop."

"Well, our captain took his pretty wife to sea with him—for, though he offered to procure a home for her on any part of the globe, she would not hear of leaving him. He was totally unworthy of such strong, passionate love as she lavished upon him, but he did all he could under the circumstances to make her happy. He liked her, she was such a strong-loving, brave-hearted girl—but he did not could not love her. It seemed as if all love had died out of his heart until the birth of his little daughter, and then some of the old slumbering affections awoke and centered in her."

"After her birth, his better nature, or what remained of it, seemed to awake, and he grew tired and sick of the evil life he led. He had glutted his vengeance sufficiently already; and she was continually urging him to give it up; and now that time had calmed his feelings concerning the marriage of Lady Maude, he wished to return to England and seek out his other child! Such was his continual resolve, but still nearly two years elapsed before he carried it into effect. At the end of that time he gave up his command of the 'Diable Rouge' to the chief mate, and with his wife and little dark-eyed daughter Rita, set out for England. No one knew him there; time and a tropical sun had changed him wonderfully, so he was free to pursue his investigations unmolested. He made every inquiry about his mother and son; but, of course, they were in vain, since, long before, they had left for this place."

"But Fate, as if not tired of showering blows upon him, had still another in reserve for him. His little daughter Rita was lost one day in the great wilderness of London, and he never saw or heard of her after."

Captain Reginald paused for a moment and averted his face, while Ray continued to listen with breathless interest.

"His wife nearly went crazy," continued Captain Reginald at last, lifting his head and speaking very rapidly; "she was crazy for a time, and he—she grew desperate. He did not rejoin the pirates—his very soul loathed them—but he became a reckless man. He roamed the world over, smuggled, ran into danger,

exposed himself to death every day—and lived through all. His wife accompanied him in every danger; she never left his side during all these long, long, sorrowful years. Fate, Providence—a superior power of some sort—drove him to this coast; he found this cave, made it one of his rendezvous, and often came here, without dreaming that his mother and son were within a stone's throw of him. Truly, as I said, this world is full of paper walls, when mother, and father, and son dwell so near, and never until now met."

He paused and came over to Ray. He started to his feet and confronted the strange narrator with wonder-wide eyes.

"Restored now!" he said, wildly. "And have they met at last?"

"They have," replied the outlaw, with a strange, sad smile.

"My father! my father! where is he?" cried Ray, half delirious with all these revelations.

"He stands beside you! I am your father!" was the thrilling answer.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 290.)

"Oh, wearisome condition of humanity!"

How many wretched homes in our land! How many heart-broken invalids! Life with many signifies a more onerous existence. All we suffer to disease, but when health is removed the hope is nearly gone out. Sickens is usually incurred through exposure or carelessness. Especially is this true with those diseases peculiar to women. Through her own imprudence and folly she is made to drag out a miserable existence—a source of annoyance and anxiety to her friends, and anything but a comfort and pleasure to herself. Exposure to the cold at times when she should be most prudent, and overtaxing her body with laborious employment, are both fruitful causes of many of the maladies from which she suffers. Gradually the bloom leaves her cheeks, her lips grow ash white, her vivacity departs, she continually experiences a feeling of weariness and general languor, and altogether presents a ghastly appearance. What does she need? Should she take some stimulating drug, which will for the time make her "feel better," or does her entire system demand reparation? She requires something which not only will restore to health the diseased organs, but will tone and invigorate the system. Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription will do this. It imparts strength to the diseased parts, brings back the glow of health, and restores comfort where previously there was only suffering.

Every invalid lady should send for "The People's Common Sense Medical Adviser," in which over fifty pages are devoted to the consideration of those diseases peculiar to women. It will be sent, post-paid, to any address, for \$1.20. Address R. B. Pierce, M. D., World's Dispensary, Buffalo, N. Y. Agents wanted to sell this valuable work.

THE WEEKLY SUN.

1776. NEW YORK. 1876.

Eighteen hundred and seventy-six is the Centennial year. It is also the year in which an Opposition House of Representatives, the first since the war, will be in power in Washington; and the year of the twenty-first election of a President of the United States. All these events are sure to be of great interest and importance, especially the two latter; and all of them and everything connected with them will be fully and freshly reported and expounded in THE SUN.

The Opposition House of Representatives, taking up the line of inquiry opened years ago by THE SUN, will strictly and diligently investigate the corruptions and misdeeds of GRANT's administration; and will, it is to be hoped, lay the foundation for a new and better period in our national history. Of all this THE SUN will contain complete and accurate accounts, furnishing its readers with early and trustworthy information upon these absorbing topics.

The twenty-third Presidential election, with the preparations for it, will be memorably as deciding upon GRANT's aspirations for a third term of power and plunder, and still more as deciding upon the candidate of the party of Reform, and as electing that candidate. Concerning all these subjects, those who read THE SUN will have the constant means of being thoroughly well informed.

THE WEEKLY SUN, which has attained a circulation of over eighty thousand copies, already has its readers in every State and Territory, and we trust that the year 1876 will see their numbers doubled. It will continue to be a thorough newspaper. All the general news of the day will be found in it, condensed when important, at full length

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE.

An Ode for St. Valentine's Day.

BY MICHAEL SCANLAN.

Rome, in her noontide splendor, barbaric but sublime,
Had flung her crimson glory over all the coming time,
And the nations sung submission when her stand-
ards were unfurled,
For her mighty march of conquest thrilled a subjugated world!
Then war, the iron-visaged, insatiate and grim,
Had drawn her adoration from all other gods to him,
'Till the roar of wrecking armies rolled like music to her ears.
Till her bosom knew not pity, till her fierce eyes
knew not tears,
For the flowering of her spirit had been blindly trodden down
By war's remorseless legions who had crowned her
for their own.

As in a shepherd's bosom, so in the heart of Rome,
Throned high above red carnage, Love had found a
regal home;
Rocked in her giant passions, wrapped in her fierce
desires,
Drew beauty from her matrons, strength from her
sheathed sires,
Then plucked the public homage from the front of
war, and wrung
Submission from the despot, till his battle banners
hung
As trophies on Love's altar, while heralds sung
abroad
Through all the templed city, "Love is the great-
est god!"
The people hailed the omen, and a day was set
apart
When war should pay allegiance to the monarch of
the heart.

That day beheld Love gazing on the fair, uplifted
face
Of Rome, and the marble visage was lit with new-
born grace—
That visage battle-molded and seeming fixed as
fate—
As if the touch of pity had softened its lines of
hate;
The flowers of her eager spirit, long crushed in her
battle gloom,
Now leaped to the genial sunshine and burst into
full-blown bloom;
For Rome had newly risen to the high belief that
life
Had deeper and holier raptures than blood-consum-
ing strife.
She that had strangled pity and murdered mirth
with jeers,
Rolled that day with laughter, and wept unblush-
ing tears.

Hark to the trumpet crashes! now drowned in the
mighty wave
Of the public voice proclaiming the god who has
come to save!
Under triumphal arches, past temples thrown open
wide,
While seas of soulful faces look homage on either
side,
Ride heralds and war-gemmed legions, their weap-
ons buried
And youths and lithe-limbed maidens, winged like
the flying hours,
Patrician plebeian bending, like thoughts in a peni-
tent's prayer,
All Rome is abroad to worship in the temple of sun
and air—
Anon comes the chariot of triumph, the victors
smiling above,
And War, in garlands wreathed, sits at the feet of
Love.

This was when the Roman in his young wolf-sight-
ed days
Tracked up the everlasting through war's mad and
blinding ways;
But time with wasting vision looked in the heart of
Rome,
And it crumbled into ashes, and temple, arch and
dome
Gaped into shapeless ruin; her altars were o'er-
thrown,
And her gods, the world-consuming, live but in song
and stone—
The fierce, the blind, the lustful; things that up-
rose from clay
At the call of the heated passions and reveled for
a day—
But Love, rose young, eternal, above the reach of
time
Above the wreck of empire, beyond the Roman
clime.

Not all the hoary legions that have lapped the
lands in flame;
That men might read in wonder some fratricidal
name,
Could keep the earth from blushing in her bridal
robe of flowers,
Nor stamp out the affections from this throbbing
world of ours;
Their gods, the crimson haloed, were consumed by
their own lust;
The adored and the adorners are long-forgotten
dust.
Gods and men grow olden, but love is ever young;
To-day, as at creation, are his hymns of rapture
sung;
We clasp hands with the Romans as we set a day
apart
To crown him and proclaim him the monarch of the
heart.

Then hail his coming herald, the gentle Valentine,
Cull flowers of the affections to strew on Love's
fair shrine,
And come with songs of gladness, sweet paeans of
old time,
Pure as the snow of Hecla, warm as the Roman
clime;
Swell, swell the living chorus by the rolling ages
sung:
"Though earth and time grow olden, still Love is
ever young,
Ever young and ever glowing, ever blessing while
being blest!"
So woo him, open-armed, oh, ye maidens of old
time,
With the beauty of the Grecian and the vigor of old
Rome;
Be your hearts his living temples, be your hearths
his dearest home.

The Men of '76.

Washington.

BY DR. LOUIS LEGRAND.

GEORGE WASHINGTON—venerated name!
One hundred years have not diminished but
added to the luster of his fame.

As time widens the space between us and
those days, when the tocsin of Liberty sounded
through the land, we see more clearly that
the hand of God was in it, for did He not raise
up great men to meet the mighty crisis?

Grandly looming up through the distance,
towers the great, wise and good Washington,
proper leader of that gigantic struggle for
freedom—the Moses of the New Dispensation,
which was to embody the Gospel of Liberty
and give to man the Government of the People.

Looking at him now, in the light of history,
and contrasting him with those great leaders
who molded the destinies of nations—Alexander,
Cæsar, Charlemagne, Charles V., Napo-
leon—we are more and more impressed with
his sublime character, for he alone of all
earth's conquerors sought not his own aggran-
dizement but to give true freedom a perma-
nent abiding place, and to plant the True Re-
public upon permanent foundations.

Washington was a Virginian by birth, and
by education a man of the people. He came
of an old and honored family—all of whom
seem to have been persons of solid worth and
substantial character, of the class denominated
"gentlemen"—landed proprietors. His great-
grandfather, coming from the North of En-
gland—the sturdy, independent and intensely
Protestant portion of the realm, settled in Vir-
ginia in the year 1657. George, born in West-
moreland County, February 22d, 1732, was the
third son of Augustine Washington, but the
eldest of five children by his father's second
marriage. He received only a fair English
education, for in those early days the sparsely
settled country could support but few schools,
and "tutors" were the chief reliance of the
families of the "gentry."

From early years George was accustomed to
hardy and active exercise. Running, wrest-
ling, jumping, horse-racing, hunting, were the
pastimes and sports of the people—in all of
which he so excelled as to become a conceded
champion. Humorous stories are related of
his extraordinary strength, prowess and agili-
ty. But in all, he was the gentleman—the
good-natured, affable and generous nature
which his serious after-life toned down but
never obliterated.

Taking up the calling of surveyor, he passed
many weeks and months in running lines over
the then quite unsettled region lying along the
base of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and in what
is now the northern portion of West Virginia.
The qualities he developed induced Governor
Dinwiddie to make him a messenger to explore
the region around and north of what is now
Pittsburgh, where the French were establishing
forts and encroaching on British possessions.
This mission of great delicacy, hazard and ex-
posure was performed in the winter of 1753—
George being then only twenty-one years of
age! So well did he discharge this trust that
the next year he was made lieutenant-colonel
of a Virginia regiment, raised to resist these
French advances, and the colonel of the regim-
ent dying, George took full command, and
then commenced a military career which want
of space forbids us to follow. He made such
a splendid record that, when Braddock fell
(July 9th, 1755) in his ill-starred campaign
against the French forts on the north, at the
ambush near Fort Duquesne (Pittsburgh),
Washington assumed command and brought
the routed and demoralized army back to safety
again, and won the highest praise for his
splendid gallantry and military judgment.
The Governor of Virginia made him commander-
of the colony's forces, and for three years
following he was actively in the field against
the French and Indians, in what is now called
"the old French War"—a struggle which
was alive with deeds of daring, adventure and
suffering.

Retiring from the army in 1758, he married
Mrs. Martha Custis, widow of John Parke
Custis, and with his wife and her two children
retired to his estate at Mt. Vernon, where the
war of the Revolution found him, pursuing the
peaceful life of a planter. Virginia sent
him as one of seven delegates to the "Con-
gress" of the colonies, called to assemble in
Philadelphia, in 1774, to consider the relations
with Great Britain.

In the first Congress he was a very influen-
tial member, as well as in the second "Con-
tinental Congress," which met in Philadelphia,
May 10th, 1775, to consider the alarming situa-
tion and devise a means of common defense.
The battles of Lexington and Concord had
been fought in April, and the gauge of war
thrown down by Great Britain was accepted by
all the colonies; so that when this second
Congress met it proceeded at once to arrange
for united defense. John Adams, of Massa-
chusetts, indicated Washington as the proper
man to assume chief command of the provid-
ed for "Continental Army," and on motion of
Thomas Johnson, of Maryland, he was nomi-
nated for that high office. The ballot was uni-
mous, and the commission was issued June
15th, 1775—two days before the battle of
Bunker Hill.

How great must have been his merits that
this wise Congress should have conferred to him
the tremendous trust of confronting all the
powers of Britain's tried armies and tested
generals! He never for a moment wavered;
his clear mind grasped the situation; its im-
mense peril to himself, his family and his es-
tate—its awful responsibility and herculean
labor—he saw it all, and with a heroism not
born of enthusiasm, but of sublime conception
of duty, he accepted the trust, and, refusing
all pay for his services, he stepped into his
history—the center of observation of the world,
and holding in his hands the destinies of three
millions of people.

To follow Washington through the eight
years of military service which succeeded, is far
beyond the limits of any mere sketch.
Volumes have been given to the glorious re-
cord, and yet the story in its completeness is
untold, for the man was so calm, so steady, so
patient, so undaunted, that, little by little, as
the years pass, we begin to see him in a clear-
er light, and to fix his true position as a man,
as a commander, as a statesman and a sage.
From North to South he moved, the very im-
personation of an unconquerable will. De-
feat, disaster, disappointment, all were met by
that stern courage, which, undaunted even by
the dreadful rigors of the winter at Valley
Forge, compelled all to venerate the man, and
to sustain to the end a cause which gave them
such a leader.

And enemies—of course he had them. Did
ever greatness escape the penalty of defama-
tion, envy and distrust? Never! He who
takes the lead of men and masses must become
the target of skulking dastard and open de-
tractors. Washington, whose fame is now so
secure, was suspected, slandered, impugned by
a cabal in and out of Congress, but the pen-
etration of the patriots at the head of affairs
saved and sustained him—the end richly just-
ifying their steadfast faith in the chief.

In the spring of 1783 it was announced that
a preliminary peace had been signed in Paris
by plenipotentiaries of the three powers, Great
Britain, the United States and France; but it
was not until October 18th of that year, that
the American army was disbanded by order of
Congress. On November 25th the British army
evacuated New York, and the American
troops still in the service entered the city—
Washington at their head. Oh, what an ovation
followed! The people, wild with delight,
fairly worshipped the ground on which he trod;
but, even then, he was the same dignified,
calm, undemonstrative man as in his eight
years of weighty responsibility, for, with a
present eye, he yet looked ahead, and asked
himself the question: "What next?"

Yes, what next? The colonies were now
"free and independent States," but only States,
each with distinct interests, with limitless
powers for mischief and contention. Inde-
pendence had released them from all foreign
control, but what would now come in its wake?
December 17th, 1783, Washington took leave
of the army in New York, amidst an immense
public gathering—a most affecting and impos-
ing incident; and, proceeding to Annapolis,
Maryland, where Congress was then in session,
he formally resigned his commission to that
august body, and retired to Mount Vernon,
the most admired and best beloved man in the
world!

What were a scepter and crown to such
glory! This Congress of Delegates continued,
in adjourned sessions, until 1787, when it be-
came evident that something must be done to
save the States from drifting apart and form-
ing dangerous and inimical coalitions. Local
and sectional jealousies, rivalries in commerce
and settlement; impending separate State
treaties with foreign powers; necessity of dis-
charging the continental debt, the acquisition
of territory to the west—all arose like so many
warnings of danger, and a convention of all

the States was called, to meet at Philadelphia
on the second Monday of May, 1787, to remodel
and perfect the scheme for a Union of all the
States under a common Constitution and au-
thority.

To this convention Washington was appoint-
ed, and upon its assembly was elected its
presiding officer. It remained in session all
summer, and resulted in the adoption, by it,
of our present Constitution (less its since added
"Amendments"), September 17th, 1787. This
was only slowly accepted and ratified by the
necessary majority of States, many of them
being very averse to a dominating central
power; and it was not until January, 1789,
that the first national election was held. The
Electoral College then chosen held its session
in February, and Washington was unanimously
elected as the first President of the United
States of America, and John Adams, of Massa-
chusetts, was elected Vice-President; but from a
delay in obtaining a quorum in Congress the
electoral college votes were not counted and
declared until early in April, on the 14th of
which month the General was informed of his
election.

His journey from Mount Vernon to the
city of New York, the then chosen seat of
Government, was one grand ovation—a kind
of triumphal progress. Crowds flocked from
far and near to cheer as he passed, in carriages,
on his way. Committees and delegations re-
ceived him as their guest, and escorted him
until other like bodies claimed him at their
boards; but, expressive as was this homage of
people along the route, the reception at New
York was so enthusiastic and spontaneous that
it needed no further ceremony to assure the
Republic. The formal inauguration took place
April 30th. At 9 a.m. of that day all the
churches in the city held divine service, and at
noon, with imposing ceremony, the oath of
office was administered in the balcony in front
of the Senate Chamber in the old Federal
Hall on Wall street (where the Custom House
now stands).

Thus auspiciously was our present Govern-
ment given form, life and effect, and, under
Washington's sagacious advice, for the succeed-
ing eight years the Republic took permanent
shape, and the United States, with marvelous
rapidity, became a power among the nations.

Retiring at the end of his second term,
Washington published his Farewell Address, a
document which, next to our Constitution, is
most revered and studied by people and law-
makers. While the Constitution is the law of
our liberty, the Farewell Address is the spirit
of that liberty, giving the correct interpreta-
tion of that law; hence, it will ever remain to
us a precious heirloom, without which Wash-
ington's incomparable gifts to man would have
been incomplete.

Retiring, in March, 1797, from office, he was
not permitted long to enjoy his serene repose
at Mount Vernon, for in July, 1798, he was
again nominated commander-in-chief of the
American armies, in view of expected war
with France, and at once proceeded to the
work of creating the first national army and
putting it in effective condition. No war fol-
lowed, however, through the sober second
thought of the French Directory, and Wash-
ington, who had not yet been compelled to
leave his home, was permitted to enjoy his
coveted rest.

Alas, for only a brief season, for on Decem-
ber 12th, 1799, taking a severe cold in riding
out over his farms, he grew gradually on the
18th ill, and after only a few hours' real sick-
ness, the strong man slept the sleep of death,
dying late on the evening of the 14th, the
symptoms closely indicating what is now
known as the dreaded diphtheria.

Vials of Wrath :
OR,
THE GRAVE BETWEEN THEM.

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL,
AUTHOR OF "TWO GIRLS' LIVES," "LOVE-
BLIND," "OATH-BOUND," "BARBARA'S
FATE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXII.
THE NEW LIFE.

If Mrs. Argelyne had been charmed upon
the first forming of Ethel's acquaintance, the
admiration deepened and grew into the fond-
est regard, as the days went on, and she noted
the quiet, high-bred ways, the elegant self-
possession of manner, the gentleness, spirited-
ness and delicacy of her disposition.

She found, too, that Ethel was well edu-
cated; that she played almost perfectly, and
could sing with a tender, pathetic voice that
instinctively made one listen in silent admira-
tion. Her beauty, too, developed under the
tender care Mrs. Argelyne bestowed upon her;
not that she had been ever aught else but won-
derously fair, but her late troubles had impair-
ed it somewhat; so that when her cheeks lost
their waxen pallor, and assumed their wonted
palestness, and the heavy black circles
disappeared from under her eyes, and into her
steps came the old, graceful springiness, Mrs.
Argelyne was enchanted, and congratulated
herself daily on the good fortune that had
brought Ethel to her roof.

For the first few days, Mrs. Argelyne had
stubbornly refused to make any business ar-
rangements with Ethel; and the girl was so
tired, so thankful for the repose that she did
not urge it. But, when a fortnight had gone,
Mrs. Argelyne found that under all Ethel's
sweetness and gentleness was a decision of
character not to be trifled with.

"I cannot think of being a loiterer in the
world, Mrs. Argelyne, nor would I respect my-
self if I allowed myself to remain a dependent
on your kind bounty. I can and must earn
my own living, and I would rather do it here
than anywhere in the world."

And when Mrs. Argelyne listened to her pa-
tient, firm words, she loved her the more, and
yielded the point at once.

"You are right, Ethel. You shall enter up-
on stated duties to-day, at a stated salary of
six hundred dollars a year, payable quarterly
in advance."

Ethel's face was tenderly radiant. A hun-
dred and fifty dollars a quarter! It was munifi-
cently large. With no expenses, and the good
stock of clothes on hand, together with her lit-
tle hoard of cash, she felt rich, with a thank-
fulness that shone all over her face.

"Mrs. Argelyne! you are generous beyond
my most sanguine expectations. How can I
thank you?"

Mrs. Argelyne laughed, softly.
"I fear you will regret when you learn what
a host of duties I shall impose upon you. You
will have to see that my rooms are always
cozy and tastefully arranged; you will have
all my toilets to invent—and you know moun-
dressing is capable of so few originalities. Then
there will be my morning and evening hours
to listen to reading and music; there will be
such tiresome tours of shopping and the dreary

rounds of calls—both of which miseries I am
disposed to make you share with me."

Ethel took up the delightful list, and went
on enthusiastically.

"You must not neglect to add my duties as
hairdresser, and seamstress, and general maid.
I am determined to earn my salary, dear Mrs.
Argelyne."

She looked so frank, so brave, so earnest.
"And I assure you I am equally determined
to get the worth of my money," returned Mrs.
Argelyne, playfully; and so the contract was
made, and Ethel commenced her duties that
selfsame evening, by reading to Mrs. Arge-
lyne, after she had undressed, and was tucked
in her dainty bed.

Life sped on feathery wings; Ethel's duties
were those that a daughter might have per-
formed for a mother; there were delightful
people constantly visiting Mrs. Argelyne, al-
though she went out comparatively little, so
that Ethel had every opportunity of seeing the
fashionable phase of society.

There were long, confidential talks, in which
Ethel opened her heart freely to Mrs. Arge-
lyne, receiving in turn friendly sympathy and
womanly advice; and during which, Mrs. Ar-
gelyne learned that there was not the remotest
idea of any feeling in Ethel's heart toward
Leslie Verne, warmer than a frank, truthful
friendship.

She learned that all of Ethel's affections had
been centered on her dead husband—or at least
Ethel herself thought so, and expressed herself
so very decidedly, even when in "the custom-
ary events of time," the first keen edge of her
grief wore off, and she took new, fresh interests
in everything about her.

Her life was so happy. Mrs. Argelyne was
the best of friends and counselors, who, while
she never permitted Ethel to suspect there were
plans afoot for her, still continually cheered
and encouraged Leslie, and even fanned the
flame of his love by her own tender compli-
ments.

He had changed considerably—Leslie had;
and Ethel saw the change with a silent sur-
prise and admiration, for his graver, more
thoughtful ways tallied better with hers.

His patient waiting now, his scathing disap-
pointment before, had left their marks upon
him—vain although he felt his love was, at
times, even now. His love for Ethel was
quiet, strong, undying; and it permeated his
entire character, making it rich and fruitful
in all the qualities which would help make a
happier woman of the one he called his wife.

He saw Ethel often, and in his heart he was
sore and sick to learn she had no thought for
him beyond that of a true, sincere friend—that
she still dwelt with unyielding fidelity upon
the memory of her dead. Their frequent in-
terviews, when they utterly ignored the light,
frivolous gossip most young people of their age
would have indulged in—when they talked
over Ethel's troubles, were full of unsatisfied
misery to Leslie, that he never dreamed were
fulfilling their mission in a manner most con-
ducive to the end he always had in prospect.
But it was so; Ethel's free, frank memories,
and Leslie's cheery, unselfish sympathy were
daily binding them in cords of regard and
fervent friendship, that was the surest founda-
tion for love to build upon—that united them
in interest tenfold nearer and dearer than any
other possible circumstances could have done.

So the wheels of time rolled slowly, evenly
on to Ethel, daily regaining her wonted cheer-
fulness, and hourly making herself more and
more indispensable in her new home, where
her deep mourning dresses were gradually
losing their unbroken somberness by means of
dainty lavender ribbons, a white flower in her
hair, and snowy folds of lace at her throat and
wrists; while Leslie Verne, in all the brave,
patient tenderness of waiting, silently watch-
ed and bided his time; while Frank Havel-
stock saw on Ida Wynne's finger the gleam of
the diamond he had placed there in sign and
seal of their engagement, and the bride-elect
dreamed her girlish dreams, and enjoyed with
a woman's pardonable vanity the *clat* of her
position; while Carleton Vinco planned, and
schemed, and enjoyed the money Georgia Lex-
ington had given him as the price of his lying
silence and absence, while the pair at Tangle-
wood drifted further and further apart into
darker glooms and more dangerous chasms.

It was one of the curiosities of this life-
drama that involved so many destinies, that
wounded so many existences, that each actor
and his part was unknown to the one most
concerned. It was one of its odd peculiari-
ties—this strange tendency to secrecy, that no
one purposely caused, or could have hindered.
It was like wheels within wheels inclosed in
a night of starless darkness; yet, the wheels
went round and round with unerring precision,
impelled by a force no human power could
withstand—a force, against which neither light
nor darkness could avail; which would accom-
plish its work with tireless zeal, regardless of
woman's tears, a strong man's silent moans;
careless of the breaking hearts that crushed
surely, slowly under its relentless iron strength.

CHAPTER XXXIII.
THE FATEFUL NAME.

PREPARATIONS for Ida Wynne's approaching
wedding were progressing rapidly, under her
own competent directions as well as Mrs. Lex-
ington's advice and suggestions.

At the first announcement of the engage-
ment Georgia had manifested her disapproval
in her quiet, effective way, to Lexington, who
had taken upon himself the responsibility of
acquainting her with the fact. He knew it
would not occasion her any particular satis-
faction, owing to her prejudices against Frank
Havelstock, which, of course, he repudiated
stoutly.

Full of misery as his life was, tortured by
fires of anger, outraged pride, jealousy, and
mad worship for the woman he regarded as so
utterly unworthy; pitiful as was the condition
of Georgia's inner life, desolate, blighted
though the frequent misunderstandings had
left her, yet outwardly, courtesy, dignity and
attention marked their intercourse, so that at
this time of approaching frequent consultations
and questions were of frequent occurrence.
Lexington and his wife had been to New
York with Ida several times on shopping tours
to Stewart's, and Lord & Taylor's, where were
being made to order the magnificent trousseaux
for the bride of Ethel Havelstock's husband.

On these occasions the groom elect had
positively refused to accompany them, greatly
to Ida's displeasure; and when he laughed and
declared he was totally unequal to playing
the role of assayer of point-laces and moire an-
tiques, Ida believed him, despite her disap-
pointment, little knowing that the true reason
was he hardly felt bold enough, as yet, to
trust to the chances of meeting his injured,
deserted wife face to face.

At this time, while vigorous preparations
were making in the feminine department of
the household, Theodore Lexington had pre-
sented the necessary petition to the Legisla-
ture, then just convened at Albany, in which
John Franklin Havelstock prayed to have his

name changed, for good reasons, which were
stated, to John Lexington; and when, conse-
quently, on account of the high social status
of the family of Lexington, the change
was speedily effected, there remained just
enough time to get out the elaborate wedding-
cards for December 1st, at which time Mr.
and Mrs. Theo. Lexington announced them-
selves "at home" to the five hundred people
whom they honored with an invitation to the
ceremony at 12 M., and the reception from 2
until 5.

It seemed strange at first, the change in
Frank Havelstock's name; and Ida pouted
considerably because her lover insisted upon
her dropping the old and assuming the new
name at once. He was very determined about
it, and enforced the new regime with a quiet
positiveness that commanded even Georgia's
admiration.

So by the stroke of a pen Frank Havelstock
disappeared from sound, and Mr. John Lex-
ington, of Tanglewood, made his bow to the
world as the proud, happy, fortunate possessor
of Miss Ida Wynne's heart and hand.

He was jubilant, this man who did not be-
lieve in eternal justice; who thought, because
his path was so far unobstructed, there never
would come dark, tortuous windings, which
should lead him into positions of horror and
danger, from which he could not return; who
refused to believe that the coming night would
bring storm-clouds and tempestuous gusts that
would beat on his head, simply because in the
morning of his venturesome wickedness there
was calm and blue sky and sunshine.

The complete sinking of his identity so far
as his name was concerned did not satisfy him,
at least for the present. So he sacrificed his
personal appearance, for a time, by shaving
his splendid mustache off, and his allowing a
tuft of beard to grow on his chin. It impaired
his looks to a considerable extent, and Ida
cried more than once over his changed ap-
pearance; but her passionate exclamation more
than repaid him for the sacrifice, for it assured
him he had succeeded in his attempt to foil any
possibly inquisitive person.

"If you knew how hideous you looked!
Your own mother never would recognize you
in that horrid way you have deformed your-
self. I think it is too mean for anything—
when I was so proud of you and wanted all the
girls to see how handsome you were."

He comforted her with the assurance that
his mustache should grow again, and then dis-
tracted her critical attention by offering to
direct the envelopes containing the invitations.
They went to the library together, Ida
hanging affectionately on his arm, and pouring
her light gossip ceaselessly in his ears.

"I don't know half of them—do you? But
I don't care. I know my dress will attract the
attention of strangers as well as friends. If
only you hadn't cut off your hair—"

He interrupted her, coolly.
"No more of that, please. Where is the
list Mrs. Lexington made out? Give it to me
—there it is."

Ida ran her eyes down the long, daintily
written list, exclamations of delight or sur-
prise or vexation escaping her as she com-
mented.

"If cousin Georgia isn't too bad. I particu-
larly requested that Nellie Myer should be
asked, and her name 's not among the Ms.
There's only the Mordaunts and Wallace Muir's
sisters, and Judge Merle's family."

"Possibly Mrs. Lexington forgot Miss Nel-
lie."

Ida curled her lip.
"She never forgets anything. Oh! the
Courtlands are coming—isn't that—"

"Invited, you mean," he interrupted,
amusedly.

"Oh, they'll come, I know. Gustie Court-
land wouldn't miss the opportunity of parading
her diamonds for half the value of them.
I do detest those Courtland girls."

"Very pretty, stylish young ladies, I un-
derstand. Have you any other exception to
take to the list?"

She went on again, critically.

"Mr. and Mrs. Ross, Dr. Sefton and family,
the Tunisons (I hope Rolfe will come, he was
a beau of mine once); then there is old Miss
Urman, and the Uphams, and Mr. Verne. I
won't have him. Fr—John! if Leslie Verne
is coming to my wedding—I—I—won't be
married."

The name sounded in his ears like a doom.
He felt a quickened pulsation of his heart, and
then—laughed at Ida's energetic words.

"Who is Leslie Verne? It seems to me I
have heard the name before. What's the
cause of ineligibility in his case?"

"Simply because I don't like him. He gave
a grand reception at Meadowbrook, a year
ago, and left me entirely out. He's a con-
ceited, good-looking fellow, not very fond of
ladies' society, and lives all alone at Meadow-
brook, with a perfect retinue of servants—
keeps up all the style of an English family of
rank. But I am determined he sha'n't see me
married. Give me a pencil. I'll cross it off
and explain to cousin Georgia."

She drew the pencil heavily across the name,
while her lover watched her curiously.

"I don't envy Mr. Verne's estimation in
your opinion, my dear; it must have been a
psychological effect that made me think I was
connected with him, somehow, though at such
wide variance."

"I don't think it could have been that,"
Ida looked coolly in his eyes, feeling the supe-
riority of her argument. "I am quite sure
the reason you remembered Mr. Verne is
that he was a very devoted suitor to a Miss
Ethel Mary!—whom you admired so at the
time."

She watched him intently; he knew such to
be the case, and, as usual in times of pressing
importance, he was perfectly master of the situ-
ation.

"And of whom you were unwarrantably
jealous, little girl. Confess you were—as a
punishment for what has been proven so un-
true."

The warm color rushed into Ida's cheeks.

"I will confess, because I was awfully jeal-
ous of her. Don't you remember the day we
rode into the village and when we passed Mrs.
Lawrence's you bowed and called her 'Miss
Ethel'? I hated her then, because I thought
she had won you. I didn't know you must
have loved me then."

"You see how foolish you were, don't you?
I certainly did admire Miss Mary! very much;
but, when it comes to *loving*—why, my dar-
ling, you know where my preferences are."

Not a quaver of his voice, not a tremor of a
muscle, as he looked Ida Wynne in the eyes
and uttered his specious lie.

"I know now, of course. But if you had
suspected how I felt that day you went from
Tanglewood and staid so long. The day after
our ride—do you remember?"

It was the quintessence of mockery. That
unconscious, guileless question. Did he remem-

ness in his eyes and a trembling in every limb as he realized that Ethel's influence was not yet gone from his heart. He drew the long list of names to him, almost savagely.

"I might as well begin. Read them, Ida, as I write."

She leaned carelessly against his chair, flushed and happy.

"Mrs. Argelyne. You don't know her, do you? Neither do I, and cousin Georgia told me she did not. But cousin Theo requested an invitation for her especially. She is a lady he met in Europe and whom he greatly admires for her culture and refinement. She moves in the most exclusive circles in New York, and very probably you and I will visit her, some day, cousin Theo says."

He wrote the name, all unconscious of its fateful implication with his own.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 298.)

JACK RABBIT, The Prairie Sport: OR, THE WOLF CHILDREN OF THE LLANO ESTACADO.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.,
AUTHOR OF "OLD BULL'S EYE," "YELLOW-
STONE JACK," "PACIFIC PETE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LOVER ON THE TRAIL.

WITH heavy step and drooping head, a mustang toiled slowly through the dry, glistening sand. Its coat was rough and harsh with dried sweat and dust; its ears hung down, its tongue protruded like that of an exhausted dog.

Its rider was not in much better case. He, too, bore traces of long and hard traveling, if not of positive suffering. His dress was disordered, his face haggard, a wild, hunted expression filled his eyes.

Suddenly his gaze became fixed, and he involuntarily tightened the reins, the willing mustang halting in his tracks. Before him, until now hidden by a jutting spur of rocks, was a peculiar scene. Though fully a mile distant, every detail was distinctly visible in that rarified atmosphere.

A dozen dark shapes were moving to and fro, round and round a prostrate figure—the figure of a man lying upon the scorching sands near the edge of the rocky tract, still and motionless as though dead.

Nearer and nearer swooped the heavy-winged scavengers—the black vultures—their broad wings shadowing the body of the unfortunate, until one, bolder or more hungry than its mates, fairly settled upon the man's shoulders.

A sharp cry broke from the traveler's lips as he saw the vulture hurriedly rise from its perch, and, with its mate, flap heavily away as though terrified. He saw the seeming corpse lift its arms and strike aimlessly around, then sink back once more.

With a wild, strange hope mingled with dread, the rider urged his mustang forward. His progress was slow, and the winged scavengers, as though resolved not to be robbed of their prey, settled down in a flock around the wretch, their sharp claws and powerful beaks quickly arousing the feeble spark of life, and the unhappy wretch fought desperately to defend himself.

A well-aimed arrow pierced one of the vultures through and through, and the traveler uttered a loud shout. With discordant cries and reluctant wings, the zopilotes abandoned the unequal contest.

Leaping from the saddle, the horseman stooped over the prostrate figure. Nearly naked, it was that of an Indian. From between his shoulders protruded the feathered shafts of two arrows. Other wounds were visible upon his side and broad breast, as though the arrows had been torn or cut out, the holes being rudely stopped with moss and grass.

A cry of recognition broke from the young man's lips as the large, bloodshot eyes met his own, and it seemed as though the remembrance was mutual, though the dying man vainly tried to speak. Instantly the traveler's water-gourd was produced, and its last drops drained into the sufferer's mouth. Scant and tepid as was the draught, it proved sufficient.

"Don Leon," huskily gasped the tiger-hunter. "I saved your life once—you made me a promise."

"I did—I promised to assist you if ever you needed help."

"I claim it now—not for myself. My trail is ended—I've struck my last tiger—thanks to the coward hands—but listen—"

In broken yet intelligible sentences, the dying man told his story; how he had met Rosina and Pablo—though he knew not their names—of their meeting with Black Garote, and his vain attempt to escape with Rosina's message.

"She said—tell Don Felipe Raymon—"

That was enough. Leon Sandoval interrupted him with a sharp cry, his eagerness so great that he could scarce wait for the answer to his questions.

The tiger hunter had seen, even as he fell, bristling with arrows, the rude seizure of the brother and sister, and knew that the maiden's worst fears had been realized. For hours he lay as though dead, but finally recovered enough to drag himself along the hot sands, heading for the point of rocks described by Pablo, the counterpart of the one where they met Black Garote.

"Save her—that's all—I ask," gasped the tiger-hunter, his head falling back.

The end of his earthly trail was reached. Yet he had lived long enough to deliver Rosina's message.

Eager as he was to follow up the clue so strangely found, the young man restrained his impatience. Though, in common with all of his race, the Spaniard had been taught to consider the "civilized Indians" as of less value than the beasts of the field, Sandoval made an exception in favor of the tiger-hunter, and could not abandon even his dead body to the vultures.

With some difficulty the corpse was lifted to the saddle and conveyed to the rocks. There, in a little hollow, the remains of the tiger-hunter were deposited, a pile of boulders above the grave insuring it undisturbed repose.

Don Leon Sandoval was a far more important personage than the position he has been given in this chronicle would seem to indicate. The son of a wealthy *haciendado*—and a *rico* in his own right—he joined the buffalo-hunters, on probation, as it were. He it was of whom Rosina thought, during her wild race, his face she expected to meet instead of that of Pablo. That they loved and were beloved, was no secret. Don Leon it was who left the wagon-train on the night of the storm; since that time he had been roving almost aimlessly through the desert, until, when hope was almost dead, he met with the faithful tiger-hunter, who lived just long enough to deliver Rosina's message.

Forgetting his own thirst and fatigue, Don Leon urged his jaded mustang on, following the broad, blood-stained trail left by the tiger-hunter. He had no definite plan in view; only to reach the spot where his heart was held captive. He knew little of Black Garote, but that little was enough to proclaim him an ugly customer, particularly with the odds in his favor.

Don Leon made but one halt on the way; at a little spring which gurgled from beneath a huge boulder, surrounded by a little patch of rich, succulent grass, very grateful to the hard-worked mustang, who greedily cropped while his master munched some tough tasoja.

The sun was low down in the west when Don Leon first caught sight of the rude carts, the dolorous screeching of which had guided him for an hour or more. The buffalo-hunters were just going into camp, and when satisfied of this, Don Leon concealed his horse among the rocks and stealthily crept forward, bearing bow and arrow, knife and lasso, the latter coiled around his body in such fashion as not to interfere with his movements.

Though an ardent lover, a bold and skillful enemy, Don Leon was still cool-headed and far-sighted enough to see that a single false move might be fatal to all concerned. While cover was plenty, the danger of being discovered by some of the keen-eyed ciboleros when contrasted with the white rocks was such that it was full sunset before Don Leon gained a position within arrow-flight of the encampment.

His heart beat high as he distinguished the figure of Rosina, but the light quickly deepened in his eyes as he noted the self-possessed air of the huge half-breed, who was then giving his ultimatum, before sending his captive into her tent.

While the buffalo-hunters were still engaged in eating, Don Leon made out the position occupied by Pablo, who was securely bound to one of the clumsy wooden wheels, in a sitting posture. His escape, unaided, was impossible; yet a cool, skillful man might hope to gain his liberty undiscovered under the cover of night. And while carefully marking out the best avenue of approach, Don Leon saw that the carreta to which Pablo was secured, contained several bows and sheafs of arrows, together with a rifle—the one captured with him.

Quiet at length fell over the encampment, and Don Leon saw that the moment for action was come. Leaving his covert, he glided cautiously forward. He knew that only one sentinel had been placed, and that upon the opposite side of the arena, or toward the desert. Unless some of the sleeping hunters were aroused, he believed that after freeing Pablo, they could steal away with Rosina, unobserved.

With a coolness and patience which few men can boast, Don Leon crawled nearer and nearer the camp, lying flat upon his stomach and only advancing by inches while out in the moonlight. More than once he paused and remained motionless for minutes, as some one of the sleepers moved restlessly, or turned over.

But then, gaining the deeper shadow, he could work more rapidly, and was soon close beside the prisoner. For a moment he hesitated, fearful that Pablo would betray all by some sound or outcry, but then he made out the youth's eyes gazing keenly upon him.

"Hist—'tis I—Leon," he cautiously whispered, as he applied his knife to the thongs. "For the Virgin's sake, be cautious!"

At any other moment, one or other of the train could scarcely have escaped seeing the dim, phantom figure which glided past the carreta, toward the skin lodge. As it was, the shadow faded away in the gloom, unobserved.

"Here—arm yourself," muttered Don Leon, as Pablo stretched his arms, free of the thongs.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TERRIBLE MISTAKE.

FOR a moment the young men were fairly bewildered, and stood motionless, still grasping the weapons they had appropriated from the carreta. Not but that they knew what had occurred; they had both of them heard the Pawnee war cry before, but the interruption coming just as they were beginning to congratulate themselves upon the success of their boldness, momentarily stunned and confused them.

Don Leon was the first to recover, and clutching Pablo by the wrist, he cried:

"Keep close to me—to the tent. If we do not get her off now, all is lost!"

With these words, the young cibolero darted forward and sprang heavily against the door-flap, tearing it loose and carrying it with him to the ground with almost stunning violence. Pablo followed close upon his heels, and for a moment or two there was rare confusion within the lodge.

Fortunately for our friends, the death-yell of the sentinel had disarranged the plans of the Pawnees, or else their hopes had not gone beyond stampeding the stock of the buffalo-hunters, since they made no regular charge into camp, contenting themselves with yelling in hideous concert and discharging their arrows from under cover of the boulders. Emboldened by this, the attacked gradually advanced nearer the edge of the desert, plying their weapons as well as the gloom would permit.

Favored by these circumstances, Don Leon and Pablo were not noticed as they crossed the open space, were not heard as they blundered into the tent, though a sharp cry of joy broke from the lover's lips as his outstretched hand came in contact with a human face, as he strove to rise.

A terrible fear seized his heart as he lifted the limp, nerveless form in his trembling arms, lest his loved one was dead. Her lips were warm, as he touched them, and he even fancied that he could feel her heart throb faintly in answer to his own as he pressed the dear form to his breast.

"She has only fainted," he whispered, hoarsely, to Pablo. "Lead the way out—quick! for the love of the Holy Mother!"

As they left the lodge, several dark figures dodging along among the boulders bade them beware how they left the shade for the moonlighted stretch, unless they wished to court discovery. All his hunter instincts aroused, Pablo turned and glided away through the shadows, keeping close to the rocky wall, thinking only of getting beyond sight and ear-shot of the camp as quickly as possible.

The hearts of the young men beat painfully as the clamor from beyond the camp abruptly ended. Was the fight—if such it could be called—over, and if so, which party had proved victorious?

The next moment, a hoarse, bellowing cry of furious rage filled the little valley with its echoes. A grating curse passed the tight-clenched teeth of Don Leon. He knew that

the truth had been discovered by Black Garote, who would spare no efforts to recapture his prey.

"On, Pablo!" he muttered, sternly. "Keep in the shade, and if they overtake us, remember that we are fighting for more than life—for your sister's honor!"

Burdened as he was, Don Leon kept pace with the young buffalo-hunter. Scrambling over or around the numerous boulders, they pressed on through the deep shadow, taking little heed to their course, hearing only the angry shouts and curses of the enraged cibolero, to which were now joined the shrill yells of the savages. Had the two bodies, so recently seeking each other's blood, combined? If not, then the fight had been renewed, and had turned against the buffalo-hunters, since the wild sounds were coming up the valley, right in the wake of the fugitives.

Don Leon paused for a moment, as if to assure himself of this fact, then spoke to Pablo.

"We must hide and let them pass by, then we can double and reach my horse. Watch for a covert."

Scarcely another hundred yards had been traversed, when the young cibolero sharply plucked Don Leon's sleeve and turned abruptly to the left, entering what seemed to be a deep, narrow pass through the high, rocky hills. The entrance was tolerably well screened by bushes, but the keen eye of the young hunter had caught sight of the divided rocks above, and reason told him the rest.

The fugitives only entered the defile for a few yards, then Don Leon resigned his charge for the first time, stealing back to the entrance with ready bow. The angry yells and shouts from down the valley came nearer, and he could tell that the buffalo-hunters were sullenly retreating before the savages, yet contesting every foot of the ground.

"If they only keep it up!" he muttered, red, easily, glancing above his head, where the divided rocks showed so plainly.

There was little room for choice either way. Were the hunters pressed too hard, might they not seek refuge in the pass, where they could make a stout defense against ten times their number? Again, were the savages to abandon the fight, it was scarcely probable that Black Garote would submit to the loss of his captives without a thorough and systematic search.

Don Leon was not long kept in suspense. When nearly opposite the cut he heard the hoarse voice of Black Garote ordering his men to fall back into the opening, and only pausing long enough to catch a glimpse of the dark figures, Don Leon hastened back to Pablo, a curse upon his lips, a disagreeable foreboding busy at his heart.

"The dogs are coming in here," he muttered, with a sign for Pablo to be cautious. "Pick your way with care—a misstep might be fatal. If they once suspect our presence here they will have us foul."

"They might run us down, but some of them wouldn't live long enough to crow over us," muttered the youth.

A few moments later the increased clamor—the fiercer shouts and more vindictive yells—that came along the defile, told the fugitives that the buffalo-hunters were stoutly defending the entrance.

"Make haste, Pablo," grated Don Leon. "Now is our time!"

"I would, only—the way is blocked up!" gasped Pablo.

For a moment Sandoval stood in silent horror, then gently lowering his burden, he sprang forward. But all was in vain. The defile abruptly ended in a high, almost perfectly smooth wall. They were in a trap—the pass was nothing more than a pocket!

They realized the full force of their discovery. They could retreat no further. Were the buffalo-hunters driven in by the savages the fugitives could only hope to escape through desperate fighting, as the defile narrowed down until two persons could not pass abreast. Were the whites victorious they would hardly omit searching such an apparently snug hiding-place.

When convinced that further retreat was cut off, the comrades selected a spot, as well as possible amid the intense gloom, from whence they could hold at bay any enemy from without, and in low whispers discussed their chances of ultimate escape.

The cries and shouts from the mouth of the pocket had died away, and all was intensely, almost oppressively still. Then, for the first time since they left the encampment, a faint sound came from the captive for whom they dared so much.

In an instant Don Leon was by her side, gently calling her by name; assuring her that all was well. For a few moments there was no answer. She lay quiet in his arms, suffering his eager lips to dwell upon hers, as her consciousness gradually returned and her memory grew stronger.

"Rosina, darling, speak to me—tell me that you know me—your Leon," he murmured, his cheek pressed to hers.

"Who Rosina? me Paquita," came the quick reply, as the little form suddenly glided out of his arms. "Who—oh! me know now! Curse Rosina—me kill her, dead, dead, two, three times over!"

The tones were little less musical than those Don Leon had expected to hear—but the words! He started back in utter astonishment, for the first time since they left the encampment, he realized they had made.

Fortunately the woman had not yet comprehended the whole truth, else she might easily have escaped.

"Who you men? what you make wid me here?" cried the woman, her voice raising higher and more shrill as her excitement increased, until there was danger of her being heard by the enemy without. "What dis place—where dat woman—"

Pablo was the first to recover his senses, and springing forward he grasped the Indian woman, one hand firmly clamping her lips, just in time to stifle a loud shriek.

"Be silent—raise your voice above a whisper and by all the saints I'll kill you, woman or no woman!" he muttered, sternly, as his choking grip gradually relaxed and sunk to the ground with a low whimper. Had there been light, had she understood the whole situation, she would have acted differently. But it was all a mystery to her. The last she remembered was being in the tent, and now—where was she?

Don Leon drew closer to her, and spoke in a harsh, strained voice:

"There was a lady in the tent where we found you. What has become of her? Speak the truth, or—"

"Yes; me know," hissed Paquita, her superstitious fear vanishing before the mad jealousy that filled her bosom. "She white-face baby—she got love-weed in her mouth—when she speak, Garote got eyes only for her. He forget Paquita—tell white woman he love her—mus' hab her for him wife! He say dis, an' me hear him, but he neber speak her so any more!"

"What do you mean—what have you done?" gasped Pablo. "If you have dared to hurt her—"

"She no hurt any more," was the cold reply. "Me make her go die—me wait till all still, all sleep, don me creep to lodge—me git inside, take knife, an'—"

"You killed her—don't say that," faltered Don Leon, his strong frame weak and trembling as an infant.

"Me creep up so—she sleepin'—me stick her wid knife, hard as me kin—"

Pablo, with a groan of horror, sprang upon the exultant woman, and would have speedily avenged his sister, only for the prompt interference of Sandoval. During the momentary struggle, Paquita slipped past them and glided rapidly through the darkness. The comrades heard her steps, but searched for her in vain. A shrill, peculiar whistle from near the mouth of the pocket, closely followed by a loud shout, told them that Paquita had succeeded in rejoining her friends.

"Only for you her tongue would never have betrayed us," muttered Pablo, gloomily.

"She was a woman—though may God's curse rest forever upon her and hers if harm has come to our angel!"

"Maybe she lied—maybe Rosina is still alive. She was insensible when we found her—"

"I don't understand it—and we are pinned up here, unable to do anything but wait—wait! when every moment seems a life-time of misery—oh, God!"

Pablo made no reply. He, too, felt the full force of their disagreeable situation. Beyond a doubt the enemy knew all now, and would be on the alert, so that an attempt to leave the pocket would be fatal. Not that life seemed so very dear to them now, but if for nothing else, they wished to live for vengeance.

Hour after hour rolled wearily on as they kept watch through the darkness, their weapons ready for use, but still no sign or sound of the enemy. Had they retreated? That was not probable, even if the savages had fled before. More likely they were lying in wait, hoping for their victims to walk blindly into their web.

And so through the weary night, until the sky grew grayer and the dim light of morning dawned upon them. Pale and haggard, yet sternly resolved, they lay behind a long boulder, peering down the defile. Presently Don Leon touched Pablo with his foot, and nodded significantly. His keen eye had detected a faint movement at some distance; the rustling of a bush. In breathless silence they awaited the result as momentary face flew by.

Then—a dark, ugly face peered out from the leafy covert, to be covered instantly with their weapons.

CHAPTER XV.

"CHECK!"

JACK RABBIT heard the words of the prophets, starting though they were, without a sign that could have betrayed her to the eager, angry eyes of the Mad Chief. He bowed his head to receive the scarf, then rode slowly back to the exultant borderer, Tony Chew.

During the rest of the visit Jack was unusually quiet. His thoughts were busy with the problems that grew more and more difficult every hour, until the solution seemed far beyond his ken.

Until now he had been willing to wait, hoping that some circumstance would turn up by which the crisis could be delayed until the four days stipulated for by Koxa had passed. But now that the hour had been set, that everything had been arranged for the feast of blood, he realized to the full what an almost impossible task he had taken upon himself.

Remember the position of the buffalo-hunters; that they were outnumbered two to one by the Pawnees, who held the entrance to the trap, and without whose permission no one could leave the circular valley. Add to this, the buffalo-hunters seemed to place the utmost confidence in their dusky hosts, mingling with them for the most part almost totally unarmed, while Jack Rabbit, as a stranger and an American, was regarded with coldness, if not with suspicion. Would they even listen, if warned? He doubted.

"I'd show my good sense by riding away and washing my hands of the whole thing," he muttered, disgustedly.

Disgusted with the fate, Jack rode back to the valley, and picking out his horse, strolled moodily around the rocky barrier, while Tony Chew kept close at his heels.

As he came opposite the crevice in the wall, Jack's face brightened, and entering, he closely inspected the "pocket." Though plainly disappointed in finding it "no thoroughfare," he evidently considered the discovery of some importance.

"We could play 'em a pretty stiff game from here, old man Tony. And yet—is it worth the powder? We can't open the eyes of those fools, and will only get barbed ourselves without doing any good—by staying here. Now, I'm not more of a coward than most men, but, honestly, I don't fancy the idea of getting rubbed out for a parcel of strangers."

"You have forgotten what I told you, then," slowly spelled the dumb man.

"That my whole future depended upon our joining this train; good enough as far as it goes, but I don't like to work in the dark," muttered Jack, discontentedly.

"You must trust me in this," was the quick reply. "If all goes well I don't think you will repent. If the worst comes—well, they say that all things are made clear after death, and you will know, then, whether I was right or wrong. Only—mark my words. If you let a chance slip you of preserving these people, you will never forgive yourself, though you live to twice my age."

"You're a regular oracle, old man Tony, and just about as easily understood. However, for once you shall have your own way. We'll save these people—though just how puzzles me to guess—whether they will or no. Does that satisfy you?"

"There are few things you can do that wouldn't please me, dear boy," spelled Chew, a look of more than common love filling his eyes. "But I am glad that you trust me in this. You shall know all in time—but not now. We will need all our nerve, I fear, before we see our way clear."

"It's all a muddle to me. We can't hope to back the crowd down again—if we save our own hair 'twill be a wonder."

"We must work through her," replied Tony. "Since she has told you so much, she'll tell more. We must get the whole plan from her, then we'll mark out the part we are to play. You have a good lead there, if you only work it right. Ha! speak of the—"

"Angel—just so, old man Tony, you're growing gallant in your old age," laughed Jack, yet with a flushed countenance, as they caught a glimpse of Mini Lusa passing before the mouth of the pocket.

"Don't lose a moment—learn all you can. I'll keep watch, and if the old man suspects anything, will keep him in play until you're through."

Scarcely waiting to read the last word, Jack Rabbit left the out and followed the trim figure of the Prophetess, who, as though ignorant of his proximity, glided rapidly on until the Pawnee lodges were nearly hidden behind the rocks. Then pausing, she turned and confronted Jack Rabbit.

The young borderer saw something in her face that checked the gallant speech he had already prepared, something that told him this interview, though purposely sought by her, had other and sterner matters to deal with. "You are prompt," she said, quickly. "I am glad of it. There is little time for either of us to waste."

"My friend was right, then, when he said that you wished to see me?"

"Yes. I have been watching my chance, all day. But—you understood my words out yonder?"

"That I am in danger here—yes. But—I know it sounds rude—are you sure there is no mistake?"

"Sure—listen. You know that the sun will set to-night; I know, just as surely, that when the sun rises to-morrow morning, its light will shine down upon the dead bodies of you and your friends, unless you take my advice and flee while you can," earnestly declared Mini Lusa.

"If we were all marked for such a death, your friends would not let me pass beyond their lines, even if I would."

"They would not dare attempt to stop you while it is light, for fear of putting the buffalo-hunters upon their guard. You can escape now, but after sunset 'twill be too late."

"Wouldn't it look cowardly for us to desert these people, without even warning them of their danger? Would you advise a friend to do this?"

"Under the circumstances, yes. It is beyond your power to save them, you remaining you only add two more lives to the massacre. But enough. I have warned you for the last time. It is for you to decide now whether you will flee and live, remain and die."

"One moment, please. I can't find words to thank you for your kindness, now, but some day, if we both live, I can and will. Of this be sure, whether I live through to-night or die before the sun rises again, I can never forget you while life lasts."

"Fly, then—you are too—too young to die," faltered the maiden, shrinking back, her eyes drooping, her face suffused beneath his ardent gaze.

"Life is sweet—dearer now than when I first came here—but enough. This is no time for—for such thoughts. One more favor, please. When is the time set, what is the signal to be?"

"First there is to be a feast, afterward a dance. There is one point in the dance—our war dance—where all the braves suddenly pause and bend their bows. To-night they will each one select a *living target*. He—my father—will arise and shake his lance, uttering his war-cry. That will be the signal," uttered Mini Lusa, in a low, monotonous tone, like that of a subject under magnetic influence.

"Thank you—be sure, whatever may happen, that I am very grateful—" began Jack, but with a low, inarticulate cry, Mini Lusa turned and darted away, leaving the young borderer staring after her in open-mouthed astonishment.

The remainder of the day passed away quietly. To the superficial observer the two parties would have appeared the best of friends. Even Raymon was light-hearted and joyous, for a scout had come in, bearing tidings of his two children. Their trail had been struck, and from that fact it was plain that they had outlived the perils of the storm. Immediately sending back word, the Pawnees had taken up the trail, promising soon to return with the young couple.

Whatever else they had decided upon, the two borderers had evidently resolved to see the play out, since they made no effort to leave the valley.

The sun sunk to rest, and the preparations for the great feast were concluded. The pale-faces, as a rule, partook heartily, but the Indians, for a wonder, when there was a chance for gorging themselves, ate but sparingly. As the Pawnee leader rather anxiously explained to the unsuspicious Raymon, the braves were reserving themselves for the dance.

Huge bonfires were built. The whites were seated in a group under the full glow. Beyond them the ground was prepared for the dance. A little to one side, a rude sort of throne was raised, affording seats for the Mad Chief and Mini Lusa.

Jack and Tony were with the other whites, like them, to all appearance unarmed. So were the Pawnees, though their weapons were piled near, ready for the last dance—the *dance of death*!

All unsuspecting of the impending peril, the buffalo-hunters, their wives and children, gayly applauded the active braves as they glided to and fro to the monotonous music. With significant glances, Jack and Tony drew near the rude throne, as the Pawnees armed themselves.

A suspicious glance greeted them, but Jack, with admirable coolness, began complimenting the chief upon the spectacle as the fated dance was begun.

"It makes me nervous, though," laughed Jack, "ever since my experience with the Kiowas. It came about in this way. A party of us mountain men, made a treaty with Blue Bull, and he invited us to a feast. Only our leader suspected anything wrong, and he dared not tell us for fear of being laughed at and thought timid. After the feast there was a dance. The weather was hot, and we soon cast aside our weapons and extra clothing, the better to enjoy the sport. You can hear what I say!"

The chief nodded, though with an uneasy air, his hand nervously grasping the spear which was planted beside him. What was the meaning of this story? was it only a coincidence?

"We didn't know it then, but we learned afterward, just how it all had been arranged. At a certain point in the dance Blue Bull was to arise and utter his war-cry, when his braves were to attack us—ha! you are ill?"

Happy Harry, THE WILD BOY OF THE WOODS; OR, The Pirates of the Northern Lakes.

BY OLL COOMES.
AUTHOR OF "IDAHO TOM," "DAKOTA DAN,"
"BOWIE-KNIFE BEN," "OLD HURRICANE,"
"HAWKEYE HARRY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXVIII. THE CABIN CONFLICT.

HARRY glanced around the room, an inward terror taking possession of him for a moment. A fire was burning on the great stone hearth, and some meat was broiling on a heap of coals. To him it was evident that the men had taken possession of the cabin and were helping themselves. But, where was old Davy? As he asked himself the question his eyes caught sight of a little pool of blood upon the floor. He also saw a track of blood leading from the pool across the floor into one corner where there was a heap of straw and blankets used by the old trapper as a bed. There was a suspicious look about this heap, and as he eyed it closely the blood was almost frozen in his veins by sight of a bloody, moccasin foot protruding from the pile of blankets. It told a fearful tale; it was Davy's foot without a doubt! Those human fiends had murdered the old trapper and concealed his body there in the corner.

"You needn't stare around here, you dashed young rascal, tryin' to come innocences on me," burst from Mucklewee's lips. "It's me—the veritable ole Billy Mucklewee. You needn't think that you can outwit, outrun, outfight ole Billy. No, sir ee; I'd an ijee you'd cut out this way, and so I took wings and let out, too. You and your little elephant of a pup 'll not slip me again. You're caged, my son, and you might as well drop your feathers."

"Murderer!" hissed the youth, with all the loathing scorn that he could throw into the words, "you ought to be quartered and fed to the wolves! You have murdered Davy Darrett, a harmless old trapper."

Involuntarily the murderer glanced toward the heap in the corner around which Belshazzar was sniffing inquisitively.

"Nobody 'll miss him," replied the wretch, seeing that the boy had discovered his bloody crime; "and to cut matters short and end this talk, I'll tumble that old dog over by him," and he drew a pistol and cocked it. But, before he could fire, Happy Harry sprang behind the villain, and jumping on his back, clasped his arms around his neck so tightly that he was choked to the floor.

"Take 'em, Bell!" cried the lad, and the next instant the dog sprang upon the soldier.

"Into 'em, Harry!"—sick 'em, Belshazzar—give 'em goss—rack it to 'em, the bloody hell-ions! Yoop! hurrah, for here's ole Davy good as a dead dead man yit! Lap it to 'em, boys, and I'll lend a helpin' hand—hurrah for 'Hail Columbus!'"

Covered with blood and suffering with a number of severe wounds, old Davy Darrett had sprung from the heap in the corner and hastened to assist his young friend and Belshazzar.

Harry clung to Bill's neck like a monkey to a limb, and the old reprobate failing to dislodge him by rolling upon him, drew his second pistol, and was about to fire back over his shoulder into the boy's face when Davy came to the rescue. He struck the pistol from the villain's hand, and then dealt him a furious kick in the ribs that doubled him up like a twisted limb.

With a howling imprecation Mucklewee strove to spring to his feet, but before he could rise the trapper snatched up the villain's pistol and shot him dead!

Then over the fallen body, Davy Darrett extended his hand, saying:

"Shake, Harry, shake! God bless your blessed little soul; wake, I say!"

"Great heavens, Davy! I thought you were dead," replied the lad, extending his hand.

"I war mortal nigh it, and thought I'd play 'possum like you are in the habit of doing; but, Harry, for God's sake don't let that dog chaw that Englisher any more! The man's dead'n thunder, now. Call him off, Harry, call him off."

Harry called his dog away from the really dead soldier; then, white almost as a sheet, he turned to Davy and said:

"This is awful, awful business, Davy. It almost makes me sick at heart to think men become hunters of men, and butcher and kill one another."

"You're entirely too tender-hearted, Harry, my boy," replied Davy. "I don't see how you get along as well as you do. But then you'll git over this by'n-by. It's natural for a youngster to have a soft heart. I like to see a soft, kind and gentle heart when the right time comes, but then I want to see it stiffen and brace up when courage and firmness is wanted. You've that kind of a heart, boy; I know you. Brave are you when bravery's required; gentle and kind when gentleness and kindness is wanted. You must git over feelin' bad about these two villains unless you fear their death will make times dull."

"I've had it lively for the past week, friend Davy," Harry announced, "and I must say that that dead wretch lying there has been the cause of a good share of it all. But, Davy, do you know a regular ole war with England is goin' on now?"

"That tells me so," and he pointed to the dead soldier.

"And do you know that a big army of red-coats have crossed the frontier and are marching down this way?"

"Didn't know that, Harry."

"It's true, it is, for a startlin' fact; I camped with 'em last night by their earnest request enforced with a loaded musket. They'll be hereabouts about to-morrow noon, and maybe sooner, for I left them feller at camp."

"Jawhilkins! you don't say, Harry?"

"I do, for a downright fact, Davy. I come by to tell you."

"Come by? whar ye goin'?"

"To general head-quarters of the American army in the north-west, which is at Detroit. I have a message, and the whole plans of the English general's proposed campaign, which I captured from a British major t'other mornin'."

"You don't say you have these things, do you? Why, if that's so, it'll bust the Britishers' calculations all to smash. Gracious! yes, you want to get that news to Hull, and it'll be the makin' of you. You're a trump, boy, and ort to be made a general or a governor when you grow bigger. I'd walk a thousand miles to vote for you, Harry."

"Davy, are you goin' with me? or will you stay here?"

"Stay here?—stay here and git gobbled by the British! Nary stay; I'll shoulder my old rifle and peg out with you. I've not much

here to lose, and everything to gain. Yes, Sir Harry, I'll shoulder rifle and peg out for tall timber with you. I want to take a hand in this war, for I never expect to see another war in my time."

"I will be pleased to have your company, Davy; and I'd suggest that we get away as soon as possible, for other enemies may be near. But before we go, me and Belshazzar wants something to eat, if you've anything in your palace of the kind. We've fasted for a week, it seems like."

"Anything to eat? Why, just look thar, brillin' on them coals. My jolly, genial guests put me to bed and then went in on their nervous system. But, ah me! how very uncertain a life. Now thar they lay, and here I stand. Yes, Harry, we'll have a rousin' old supper, then set sail. Rust, let us drag these poor devils aside and cover 'em up; then, while I'm washin' up and puttin' on some clean buck-skin you amuse yerself the best you can."

"I'll select a rifle from among our enemies' effects, as I was relieved of mine at the British camp last night."

"Do so, Harry—go ahead, make yerself right to home—indulge freely, partake of whatever pleases your fancy—be reckless as you please, for this is our last hour, p'raps, at the palace of ole Davy Darrett."

Harry examined the weapons of the soldier and Mucklewee, and, to his happy surprise, found the gun and accoutrements that he had been compelled to leave in Brock's camp. Mucklewee had substituted the elegant new rifle for his old flint-lock musket, little dreaming what a short time he was to possess it.

Old Davy soon washed the blood from his person and attired himself in a clean suit of buckskin from head to foot; then he set about preparing supper. This required but a short time, when they sat down and ate heartily.

When the meal had been finished some of the remnants were stowed away in a leather game-bag for future need, then the two took their departure for Detroit, Davy bidding farewell to the cabin as though it were an old time-honored friend.

It was dark by this time, at least it seemed so to our friends when they first plunged out into the woods. The wilderness was droning forth its monotonous song; but the sky was clear and starry, and the air cool and fragrant with the odors of the wildwood.

The two had journeyed but a short distance when the whinny of a horse suddenly broke through the woods. They came to a halt and listened. Not far away they could hear a sound, like a horse impatiently pawing the earth, mingled with the clinking of ring-bits and stirrups. Davy pressed his ear to the earth and listened long and intently, but could make out nothing further than the sounds indicated.

"By hornits!" exclaimed Harry, as a thought occurred to him.

"Now what, Happy?" questioned Davy.

"I hadn't thought of that before."

"Of what?"

"Of Mucklewee and the soldier havin' horses concealed near your cabin."

"You don't know yit that such is the case."

"No, but then it's possible. That noise is made by a horse pawing the ground and he must be hitched in there. Come along, and let us investigate the matter anyhow."

They crept softly forward and that pounding upon the earth ceased as they advanced, and was followed by a snorting, sniffing sound.

"Just as I told you, Davy," suddenly burst from Harry's lips; "here's two horses all saddled and bridled for us. Mount, Davy, and we'll ride down to Detroit; we will, for a square fact. Whoa, Prince! easy, now, ole steed," and he approached one of the restless animals and began caressing it. In a moment he had quieted its fears, then he untied it, and with but little difficulty mounted into the saddle.

Old Davy's horse was a little fractious, and as the old borderman had not been upon a horse's back for twenty years he deputed himself somewhat awkwardly. With some difficulty, however, he finally got into the saddle, and then they resumed their journey.

Happy Harry could not refrain from an occasional outburst of merriment at the ludicrous figure of old Davy, doubled up and reeling to and fro on the animal's back like a monkey in a circus.

"Blast it, boy, why do you laff at me! A feller can't help gittin' scar—sick, I mean, on account of the vessel's motion. Jist wait till I catch the hoss's step, and then I'll sway edactly right every time."

"You're top heavy, Davy; you are, for a fact."

"Ah, my boy! if you'd clumped around on foot as old Davy, you'd be top-heavy, too, under sich circumstances as these. But, never mind; I'll soon git ballasted, and then I'll show you a thing or two on hoss-back. It's not my fault that I'm reelin' around here; it's the hoss's fault; he won't walk square under me, that's whar'the matter."

"You are like Jerry Jones when he got drunk and fell down. It wasn't on his account nor the liquor's, oh no, that he fell. He said that the earth was like an old wagon-wheel, and had lost its disk and got to wobblin' on its axis, and of course he couldn't keep his footin'."

"Well, Jerry wasn't fur from right," repeated Davy, affecting justification for his own awkward horsemanship.

They rode on as fast as the nature of the forest would admit, and about midnight struck the head-waters of a little creek flowing in a south-easterly course toward the Huron river.

"Do you know what stream this is, Davy?" Happy Harry questioned.

"It's Brownstown creek," replied the trapper. "It's 'bout twenty miles to its confluence with the Huron river, then it's twenty or thirty miles from there to Detroit."

"Can't we reach the fort without followin' the creek and river?"

"We can, yes; but then as it is night and the way uncertain and dangerous, we'll make time to stick to the water-courses as guides."

"All right, Davy; as you say," and they kept on down the stream.

They journeyed on until daylight, when they rode into the creek and watered their animals, then selected a grassy spot, drew rein and dismounted, to allow the animals to rest and graze awhile.

While reclining under a tree and partaking of the remnants of their supper, they were suddenly startled by the report of fire-arms far down the creek. The firing was sharp and vigorous for several minutes, then it ceased entirely.

"Something wrong down that way, Harry," declared Davy, with a dubious shake of the head; "surely the British haven't got in ahead of us and been attacked by our sojers."

"Impossible; the army could not have moved so rapidly with their heavy guns and baggage-wagons. It may, however, be a de-

tachment of cavalry sent out in advance of the main column to reconnoiter. Or it may be a skirmish between the Americans and a band of Indians."

"We can soon find out by mountin' our critters and joggin' 'em friskily down that way."

"And we might jog into an ambushade of Indians, too. A feller can't be too keeful, Davy, these war times. An Injin or Britisher is jist liable to hop out of a bush as a wolf or deer, and we've got to feel carefully along."

"You know your business, so go ahead, jist as you think proper."

They finished their breakfast, mounted their animals and rode on down the creek. The imprint of horses' hoofs in the yielding earth suddenly arrested their attention; and upon careful examination of the ground they found that a large body of horses had passed down the stream. They also examined the tracks and found that they had been made by iron-shod hoofs. They found such a material difference in the shape of the shoe and that of the animals they rode, that they were led to believe a party of American horsemen had gone down the creek that morning. If so, they had fallen in with a band of savages, which accounted for the firing.

"What do you still counsel, Harry?" asked Davy; "had we better keep on down the creek, or bend off to the right a leetle?"

"Keep right on down the Brownstown. We may fall in with a party of friends, and be able to make ourselves useful."

"Just as you say, Harry. I'm in for anything that'll not disgrace the American eagle. Anything that'll shed glory on old Cumby, I'm in for."

They pushed carefully on, and finally entered an opening in the forest of perhaps forty acres in area. On the opposite side of this clearing the keen eyes of our friend caught sight of something fluttering in the air above a clump of bushes. It required not a second glance to tell him what it was.

A low, suppressed cry of delight burst from Harry's lips, while old Davy Darrett swung his cap aloft and shouted at the top of his powerful lungs:

"Hurrah for the star-sprangled banner! the American eagle! and Hail Columbus, happy land!"

The sight of their country's flag waving so gracefully in the bright, morning sun, filled their breasts with renewed spirit and enthusiasm; and giving their animals the reins, they galloped forward.

Although they could see no one yet, they knew that beneath the folds of the flag they would be greeted by friends and American patriots with:

"Freedom's soil beneath their feet,
And Freedom's banner waving o'er them."

CHAPTER XXIX. THE OLD BORDERMAN'S TEST.

As Happy Harry and old Davy continued to advance toward the camp, a man, in the uniform of a captain of the United States army, rode out of the woods and halted them.

"Who comes there?" he demanded, in a stentorian voice.

"Two doggone good American chaps," was old Davy's response. "I am ole David Darrett, hunter and trapper, and this 'ere fractional part of a man at my side is Happy Harry, the Wild Boy of the Woods."

"Advance, then," responded the officer. "You will report at once to Major Van Horne."

The two rode forward and were conducted into the timber where nearly two hundred mounted infantry were temporarily encamped. They were ordered to dismount at the edge of the camp, and while two men took charge of their animals, the captain conducted them to the commandant, whose quarters were under a low, branching tree.

Major Van Horne received them kindly. He knew them both by reputation, and so entertained no doubts of their loyalty. After having passed the usual compliments, the officer asked:

"What news have you from the north-west?"

"Nothin' good, major," replied Harry. "General Brock, with a lammin' big army, is in this territory, marchin' on Detroit, with ole Tecumseh and his minions at his right. Fifty miles don't separate you from them this holy minute; it don't, for a fact."

"Can this be possible?" exclaimed the major, startled by the information.

"It's a fact, major; I war a prisoner in the camp of the British, night before last, and so I know of what I'm speakin'. Before captured, I was an eavesdropper at an interview between General Brock and old Tecumseh, and heard 'em make their 'rangements. Oh, I tell you, major, it's goin' to be warm on the peninsula. They've gained admittance to the lakes with their boats, and, just a few nights ago, a party of us surprised and captured the little brig 'Scout,' with supplies for Brock's army. But then, major, this is not what I'm here for—in fact, I am not here for anything. I'm on my way to Detroit with some documents of great interest to the American arms."

"Ah, indeed! Is it possible that you are one of our spies?" asked Van Horne, in an undertone.

"I don't know what you'd call me, but I'm an American boy, and fightin' for yonder flag. You see, I captured, or rather played a sly trick on a British major t'other mornin', and got from him the paper I am now carrying to General Hull."

"Do you think it contains anything that would be of interest to me, Harry?"

"Not a doubt of it, major, for it is of interest to every loyal American; and I believe I'd better let you see it."

So saying, he pulled off his moccasin and with the point of his knife ripped a slit in the lining, from behind which he drew out a folded paper and handed it to Van Horne.

The major unfolded it, and with the assistance of Harry, the whole secret was unraveled.

"Good heavens, Harry!" exclaimed the officer, as soon as it had been examined, "that paper must be forwarded to Hull immediately—without another hour's delay. It is of the most vital importance to the American army in the north-west. It is a key that will enable us to open the way to victory. It is the written plan of the English general's proposed campaign, and with this in our possession it will enable us to meet them, fully prepared. Yes, Harry, this must be forwarded at once. I will send a special messenger with it—an old ranger, who knows every foot of ground between here and Detroit, and who has the fleetest horse in the command. By noon he will deliver it at Detroit. But rest assured, Harry, that your part in this heroic deed shall receive full mention in my official report. Your patriotism and bravery in this matter shall not escape the notice of President Madison."

"Well, major, if this document is of so much value and importance as that, start your man for the fort at once."

The major summoned one Lieutenant Strahl,

an old ranger, to whom he entrusted the paper, with orders to deliver it to General Hull at the earliest moment possible.

"I'll do my best toward it, major," replied the old ranger, bowing himself out of the commandant's presence.

In a few minutes he was mounted upon the fleetest horse in the command, and flying through the woods toward Detroit.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 301.)

Sports and Pastimes.

BY HENRY CHADWICK.

THE NATIONAL GAME. THE CENTENNIAL NINES.

In the old time of 1776, balls flew fast and furious over the fields of the country; but the "regulation" balls of the period in question were leaden bullets, impelled from military muskets, and the scenes of the contests were bloody fields where death and carnage ruled supreme. In 1876 balls will be seen flying fast through the air again, and thousands will be gathered on the fields where the contests for victory will take place; but what a difference in the nature and character of the conflicts. In 1876 the balls will be composed of gum and leather, and they will fly from the ashen bats of athletic youths to the expectant palms of merry, active ball-players on the bright, green fields of peaceful, recreative exercise.

The Centennial year will, of course, be one of notable events; but it promises to be one of special interest to the ball-playing fraternity, as there can be no doubt that more clubs will take part in the campaign of 1876, and a greater number of contests take place than ever before known in the history of the game. Base ball is now fully established as the national game of America. Let its origin have been what it may, the game as now played is essentially an American game; and beyond all question it surpasses all other field sports in popularity on the American continent.

What cricket is to an Englishman base ball now is to an American, and the two games—so distinct in their features—are each representative of the peculiar characteristics of the two nationalities. The former game is for the leisure classes, as it requires a couple of days' play to complete a full match; while a contest at base ball between two first class nines can be settled in two hours.

THE CENTENNIAL CLUBS.

The professional arena for 1876 promises to be the scene of a series of more evenly-contested matches for the championship pennant than ever before known in the brief history of the professional National Association. The breaking up of the invincible Boston team of 1875 and the transfer of four of their prominent players to Chicago, will undoubtedly have the effect of lessening the chances for success of the Boston club for 1876, and will proportionately strengthen that of the Chicago club. The other leading clubs, too, of the Centennial arena have materially improved their forces, so that there will not be such a one-sided fight for the pennant during 1876 as there was last season, when the Boston club took a winning lead from the start, and maintained it to the close, marking their record with a series of victories unprecedented in number in the creditable history of the club.

This year the issue will be West vs. East more distinctly than ever before. In 1870 the Chicago club's main object was the defeat of the invincible Cincinnati Red Stockings, and they captured their Cincinnati adversaries in that year by two victories out of three games played. Since then it has been Chicago vs. Boston, until 1875, when a side issue was introduced by the *entree* of the St. Louis club as a rival for the championship of the West, held by Chicago since their victory over Cincinnati in 1870. This fight in 1875 ended in a drawn battle, each winning five games of the ten regular championship contests they played together. This year the South, for the first time, sends in a representative team to compete for the professional championship, and what with this new element of interest in the rivalry for the championship of the West between Chicago, St. Louis and Cincinnati, in addition to the battle for supremacy between the West and the East, the coming campaign bids fair to be the most exciting of any that has taken place since the contests for the professional pennant were inaugurated.

Glancing at the contending forces which are now ready to enter the arena for 1876, we first review

THE WESTERN CLUB TEAMS,

which include the Chicago, St. Louis and Cincinnati clubs, the Louisville club being the Southern representative in the professional arena, and the first to enter the lists from the Southern States. We first take up the strongest team of the West, viz.:

THE CHICAGO CLUB

and the Centennial team for this club is as follows:

White, catcher, from Boston club; Peters, short-stop, of Chicago club; Spalding, pitcher, from Boston club; Glenn, left field, of Chicago club; McVey, first baseman, from Boston club; Hines, center field, of Chicago club; Barnes, second baseman, from Boston club; Addy, right field, of Philadelphia club; Anson, third baseman, of Athletic club.

This is an especially strong team beyond question. The in-field, particularly, cannot well be surpassed. It includes the champion catcher of 1875; the most intelligent and skillful strategist of the pitching arena of last season; an excellent first baseman and change pitcher; an unrivaled second baseman, and a first-class man at third base, with a quick, active, earnest, hard-working player for short-stop.

In the out-field they have also a strong trio, though not quite of the high mark of their in-field. The whole question of their success as a team this season depends not so much on the individual strength in playing skill which they have collected together, as on the likelihood of their being worked up to the point of thorough harmony as a team. Spalding will be manager and captain, and if he can command obedience to his behests, good work will be done; but if not half the advantage to be derived from the playing strength of the team will be lost. The new nine will have to run the gamut of the press comments of the Chicago papers, which hitherto have been characterized by fulsome praise in success and gross abuse in defeat, this having proved the most demoralizing element the Chicago nines of the past three years have had to contend with. It all arises from the fact that the writers on base-ball in Chicago have always been more or less concerned in bets or "pools" on the games they have had to report, and when this is the case, impartial criticism is out of the question. There is no lack of ability, or of a desire to be fair, no doubt,

but when a man has lost his bet or his pool on the local nine he does not exactly feel in the mood to do them justice, and when he has won he is equally blind to their faults.

Next to the Chicago nine comes the team of their rivals of St. Louis.

THE ST. LOUIS CLUB.

Last season this club had a strong corps of players, but they were not well managed, and the result was a partial failure, for though they were not whipped by Chicago they did not win the Western championship, and only reached fourth position in the race for the pennant. This year does not promise much better results, if we are to judge of the matter by some of the selections made for their Centennial team. As selected the team for 1876 will be as follows:

Clapp, catcher, from Athletic club; Pearce, short-stop, of St. Louis; Bradley, pitcher, of St. Louis; Cuthbert, left field, of St. Louis; Dehman, first baseman, of St. Louis; Pike, center field, of St. Louis; Batten, second baseman, of St. Louis; Mack, right field, of Philadelphia; Miller, third baseman, of St. Louis; Blong, assistant, of St. Louis.

It is said also that McGeary, of the Philadelphia club, has been selected as one of the nine. If this is so, then a lack of judgment has been shown, to say the least, in view of the circumstances surrounding that player's conduct while in the Philadelphia nine of 1875. It is worse than folly to take in players into a nine—intended to be run on thoroughly straight principles—whose course has been one marked by alleged "crookedness," or who labor under the ban of suspicion. It has a demoralizing effect upon the nine, apart from anything else. For this reason the St. Louis club will not be as strong as it would otherwise have been but for the selection of an expelled player in the person of Blong, and a "marked man"—so the Philadelphia papers say—in the person of McGeary. The latter is a fine player, beyond doubt, a good catcher and excellent short-stop. But what of that, if he is not to be relied upon to play his best?

The other Western club team is that of

THE CINCINNATI CLUB.

Of this team we cannot say much, as most of the men are new to us. But Mr. Joyce seems to be content with his choice, and as he went in to get a team equal to the old nine of the Reds of 1869, and thinks he has just as strong a nine, we have nothing further to say than to name his choice, which is as follows:

Pierson, catcher, from the Star club (of New York); Kessler, short-stop, from Atlantic club; Fisher, pitcher, from Philadelphia club; Sunden, left field, from Cincinnati club; Gould, first baseman, from New Haven club; Field, center field, from Cincinnati club; Sweeney, second baseman, from Atlantic club; Jones, right field, from Cincinnati club; Clack, third baseman, from Atlantic club; Wandell, assistant, from the Resolute club.

This team will be likely to be third on the list of Western nines at the close of 1876, and of course further in the rear than that in the race for the pennant.

We now come to the representative professional nine of the South, and here we find a strong team, and one likely to be under very able management; we refer to

THE LOUISVILLE CLUB.

The progress of this nine will be watched with interest by all the Southern base ball fraternity, and should they conclude to take a trip South this winter with the Chicago team, the latter will find the Louisville nine monopolizing all the sympathy of the Southern assemblages. Of course the Louisville nine will strive to defeat their rivals of St. Louis and Chicago, but their main object will be to "go for the Eastern nines," with a view of winning a good position in the pennant race. For this object they have selected a very strong nine for the club, as the appended list of names will show:

Snyder, catcher, from Philadelphia club; Fulmer, short-stop, from Philadelphia club; Devlin, pitcher, from Chicago club; Ryan, left field, from New Haven club; Carbine, first baseman, from Western club; Hastings, center field, from Chicago club; Gerhardt, second baseman, from Mutual club; Bechtel, right field, from Philadelphia club; Hague, third baseman, from St. Louis club; Allison, assistant, from Hartford club; Chapman is manager, and Fulmer captain of the nine.

A recent meeting of the Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati and Louisville clubs, held at Louisville, resulted in a unity of action looking to a reform in professional play, which, it is to be hoped, will be felt at the next Convention.

We now come to such of the Eastern clubs as now stand ready to enter upon the campaign of 1876, and they are the Boston, Hartford and New Haven clubs. The nines of the

EASTERN CLUBS

are as follows, exclusive of those of the Athletic, Mutual, and Philadelphia clubs, which have not as yet been completed. The Boston team includes McGinley, catcher, from New Haven club; G. Wright, short-stop, of Boston club; B

SOME FEET.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

His feet they were so very large
That any one 'twould beat
To tell if the feet belonged to the man
Or the man belonged to the feet.
To make his shoes it always took
An endless amount of stock;
And he couldn't get them repaired unless
He took them down to the dock.
He was far more firmly set on earth
Than any man in town;
And his fess all said it was impos-
sible to knock him down.
People would look at them and say,
With many laughing peals,
They never saw anything half so big
That didn't go on wheels.
Such large live things of course would have
A will of their own so strong,
Whenever they took a notion to go
They'd go and take him along.
'Tis said, although the man was short,
That when he laid in bed
The blankets were quite long enough
To cover his feet and his head.
And when he started for any place,
Though manfully he did strive,
His toes would be there some minutes before
His body could arrive.
And when this man would go by rail
To take a journey afar,
He'd sit behind on the last coach
With his feet on a platform car.
His feet took up so much of the streets
The citizens, fearful of harm,
Held an indignation meeting at last,
And advised him to move on a farm.
A singular thing about it was
And nevertheless quite true,
That the more those feet developed
The smaller that man grew.
At last that man gave up the ghost,
And here was the strangest freak,
Although he laid th-re dead and cold,
His feet didn't die for a week!
And while they made his grave quite deep,
Two yards, or thereabout,
They saw with dismay that after all
His shoes at the top stuck out.
So to keep his memory green,
As time on its journey rolls,
And to save the price of a marble slab
They chalked his name on the soles.

Darrel's Reward.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

"It's very annoying, to say the least. I am sure I do not see how it could have happened." Mrs. Pontifex arched her handsome black eyebrows, and laid an arm around the shoulder of her son Darrel, a stylishly-dressed, imperious-faced boy of ten years, as if to ward off his precious, exclusive person, any evil effects that might arise from the persons whose presence Mrs. Pontifex had expressed herself as being so "very annoying."

Darrel looked contemptuously at the two intruders into the sacred precincts of the inclosed grounds at Mildred Lawn.

"Mamma, I am sure they are thieves. They are gipsies, aren't they, and gipsies are always thieves."

Mrs. Pontifex straightened her elegant, portly figure, haughtily.

"We don't want anything of you. Leave the grounds at once."

The elder of the two, a tall, gaunt girl of Darrel's age, dropped a courtesy.

"We have come far, and have no money or food. Let me play, and Giulia will dance, and we will get a penny to buy bread."

"I tell you to leave the grounds at once, unless you wish to be put out. Darrel, my darling, do not go near them. They are not fit to be near decent people."

The smaller girl suddenly stopped in her dance, her great, solemn eyes, looking out from her dirty face straight into Darrel Pontifex's aristocratic countenance.

"Please—a penny—only a—"

Her low, timid voice was drowned by the gruff tones of the gardener, who had heard the twanging guitar from his greenhouse.

"Clear out of this, you pair of nuisances! Out with you, 'less you want the dogs on you! Master Darrel Pontifex!"

But the boy's high tenor voice effectually overrode the man's.

"Mamma! didn't I tell you they were thieves! See there—see what she's got—my silver buckle! I saw her watching a chance to grab it!"

The gardener caught little Giulia's slender arm.

"Come, now, drop it! don't let me catch you here again, either!"

And, kind-hearted at bottom, Jinnison would have let them go, but Mrs. Pontifex angrily refused.

"The idea of the little wretches daring to steal under our very eyes! Darrel, go to the office and tell your papa to bring a policeman here at once and arrest them. It will be a mercy to lock them up."

Giulia's dark face blanched with fear and rage.

"I not steal it! I not know it on the grass till I tread on it! I not steal anything!"

Mrs. Pontifex sneered insolently, and Darrel stopped to laugh maliciously before he sped off to the "office."

"Giulia never steals, lady; don't lock us up—see, you have your silver—we will go and never come again."

The elder girl took the smaller one's hand protectingly, and slung her battered guitar over her shoulder.

"Jinnison, they are not to go. I shall have them arrested as vagrants and thieves."

And five minutes later a strong, blue-coated policeman detailed for special duty at the magnificent country seat of Jeffrey Pontifex, was dragging the children rudely along. One, the elder, with compressed lips and flashing eyes, the other, little Giulia, crying and resisting with every tread of her little bare feet on the dusty road.

And Mrs. Pontifex and Darrel, in his elegant costume of navy-blue velvet and solid pearl buttons, watched them away without a misgiving.

"Will I do, think you, Antonia?"

A more bewitchingly piquant face was never lifted for commendation than was raised to the dark eyes of Antonia Vincenza—a face over which the radiant smiles dimpled in rapid, happy succession; a face full of light and shadow, from the magnificent eyes, black as polished ebony, with heavy, curling lashes, and brows that were an exquisite arch, to the small, rosy mouth, that seemed made more especially for a lover's kisses than ought else.

Antonia looked frankly down in the girl's radiant face.

"My darling, you are, as usual, past criticism. It seems to me every new costume you wear is more brilliantly becoming than the last, but to-night, Giulia, you are positively glorious."

A little, low laugh came rippling from the girl's scarlet lips.

"You are almost as great a flatterer as Mr. Darrel Pontifex, dear. He swears by me, I believe."

A sudden dark cloud spread over Antonia's face.

"I cannot bear to hear that name, Giulia. The remembrances of it, and all that followed, are as fresh to-day as fifteen years ago. The only mystery to me is how you became acquainted with that man, and why you encourage him as you do. You know he will never marry you, dear."

A frown black as her own eyes, then a burst of sunshiny laughter from Giulia.

"You dear, good sister! Why don't you say I never will marry Mr. Darrel Pontifex? Wait and see—that's all; and now for fresh laurels to-night."

And Antonia watched the radiant face away, and turned with a long, bitter sigh to her book.

A tiny, octagon-shaped morning-room, hung with folds of rare rose-silk, toned down by cobwebs of lace; delicate rose-plush furniture, that had been selected with especial regard to Mrs. Jeffrey Pontifex's brunette complexion; and Mrs. Jeffrey Pontifex herself, in elaborate breakfast toilet, standing beside the small in-laid table in the center of the apartment, looking with griefed, half-indignant expression at the handsome, rather dissolute young gentleman lounging in a chair beside the open fire.

"It is simply preposterous, Darrel," she was saying, energetically. "The idea of any one refusing to marry you—and particularly the girl who is nobody but a public singer! Why she may thank her luckiest stars you have so honored her. Refuse you, indeed!"

"Ridiculous or not, she has refused me, and she knows I just worship the very ground she walks on."

Mrs. Pontifex smoothed the soft, lustrous silk of her dress. "Girls often refuse the first time, Darrel. Indeed, I think I refused your poor papa twice before I finally consented to—"

"Hang it, you don't know Giulia Vincenza, mother, if you think she's that sort. I tell you, she's said she wouldn't have me, and she won't. Haven't I asked her, begged her, time and again! and can't I tell whether or not she's flirting?"

It was the remains of the same pleasant voice of fifteen years ago, and Darrel Pontifex was just the looking man at twenty-five that ten gave the promise of—excepting the marks of dissipation that late years had indelibly written on his bold, fair, handsome face—so unlike his mother's—so utterly unlike Giulia Vincenza's, the witching Italian songstress who had made him her hopeless captive.

"Very well, then, Darrel, if you think you know more and better than I do. However, if you propose to let this Miss Vincenza give you the mitten—why—I presume you will take it quietly."

He muttered something that Mrs. Pontifex did not hear; then looked in her face with an expression she knew meant even more than his emphatic answer said:

"If you call it taking it 'quietly' to go off somewhere—the Lord only knows where—and never show my face here again—if you call it 'quietly' for me to know my life is blasted, for love of Giulia Vincenza—all right. Assure as the sun shines I will never see you again, a home again, if she refuses me once more."

Mrs. Pontifex shivered with pain and fright. This darling of hers, for whom she lived, on whom all her hopes were centered—Darrel to leave her! Darrel to blight her life, even as this dark-eyed, heartless beauty would blight hers!

Her voice quivered when she spoke to him. "She shall make you happy—make me happy. I will go to her, Darrel, and plead our case, shall I? I will tell her how you love her, how other women have tried in vain to win you and your great wealth, how happy we were until she came to disturb us. I'll beg her, on my knees, Darrel, to be merciful to us, and come to us, your wife, Darrel, and my daughter. I will go, before you leave this house. Wait for me until I come back with good news. She'll not refuse me, dear."

And the elegant Pontifex barouche, with its olive lining, its proud crest on the shining panels, its horses stepping so proudly, and tossing their heads until the gold-plated harness gleamed dazzlingly in the morning sunshine, drew up before the door of the Vincenzas' residence; and Mrs. Pontifex alighted, and went in, and waited in the elegant little reception-room till Miss Vincenza should appear.

Directly came a rustle of heavy silken drapery; then a faint odor of jasmine, then the most regally beautiful girl Mrs. Pontifex had ever seen, whose grand dignity of manner made even that lady just a little confused.

"I am Giulia Vincenza, and you wish to see me. You are Mr. Darrel Pontifex's mother, I presume?"

Such a sweet, rich voice it was, and Mrs. Pontifex began her strange errand at once—pleading as only a mother can plead, for what was dearer than life.

The girl listened, gravely; then smiled, carelessly.

"Fifteen years ago, Mrs. Pontifex, when you thrust my sister and myself into jail, knowing we were as innocent as the rude boy who made the complaint, I vowed to have my revenge on you, or him. I think I have it. Do you remember?"

Then, it came to her like a lightning flash, and Mrs. Pontifex knew she had received her reward; and she went away, to tell her son she had failed, and why.

And Darrel kept his word, and Mrs. Pontifex, a white-haired, lone widow, has not seen his face for years and years.

The Squire's Wooing.

BY EHEN E. REXFORD.

"I DECLARE, if there isn't Squire Doane coming up the path," exclaimed Mrs. Cross, as she looked out of the sitting room window, after hearing the clicking of the gate-lock, which always warned them when visitors were coming. "And we aren't slicked up a bit. But he's coming on an errand, likely, and won't be apt to notice if things ain't just as they should be. He hasn't been over to see us in ever so long. He's growing old fast, Ruth, isn't he? His hair's pretty white."

Mrs. Cross sighed softly, as she brushed a chair and straightened the tidy on the lounge-pillow. Years ago, before there was a hint of silver in Squire Doane's hair—when he was simply Stephen Doane, or oftener "Steve," among the boys and girls—he had held a tender corner in her heart. Everybody said that Mary Cross and Stephen Doane would make a match. But it sometimes happens that what everybody says doesn't come true, and it happened so in this case. She had married first, more to suit her parents, probably, than herself. Then Stephen had married, and for twenty-five years they had lived within sight

of each other. Death had come to her and him. For ten years her husband had been sleeping in the old church-yard on the hill, and for half that time his wife had lain beneath the same green grass and daisies.

"Yes, Squire Doane is growing old," answered Ruth. "He's fifty-five, isn't he? as much as that, I should think. Seems to me you told me once he was five years older than you are."

"Yes, fifty-five or six," answered Mrs. Cross, just as his knock sounded at the door; and Ruth went to let him in.

Mrs. Cross succeeded in getting the very faintest glimpse of herself in the glass while Ruth was at the door. It was a pleasant face that she saw in the old-fashioned mirror, with faint, late roses showing still in her cheeks, and eyes that had never lost their early sunshine. There were silver threads among the brown hair, banded smoothly back from the forehead, and sometimes of care upon her brow. But, she was fifty years old, she thought, and fifty years and a face in which they have left no traces one does not often find together. And then she wondered why she should think anything about her looks. Squire Doane knew that she was growing old as well as she did.

"Good-afternoon, Mary"—it had always been Stephen and Mary between them—he said, as he came in. "I got lonesome, and thought I'd run in and chat awhile."

"I'm glad you did," she said, cheerily, wheeling out the rocking-chair for him. "What's the use of having neighbors if we ain't neighborly, as aunt Dorcas always says?"

The squire sat down, and Mrs. Cross drew a chair up by the window, and busied herself over her knitting. Ruth sat down in the doorway and lulled the strawberries she had been gathering for tea. When that task was done, she took herself off to the kitchen, and the squire and her mother were left alone.

"Ruth must be a sight of comfort to you," said the squire. "She's a smart, capable girl, Mary."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Cross, with a proud smile. "Ruth's smart, if she is my daughter, and she's a good girl."

"She'll be getting married one of these days," remarked the squire, thoughtfully. "She'll make a good wife, Mary."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Cross, slowly. "I don't want to let her go, though I s'pose I'll have to, some time. I don't know what I should do 'bout her."

"It is lonesome living alone," said the squire, with a sigh. "Lucy's been dead five years next August, and though cousin Sibyl has been a good housekeeper, and kept everything up as well as any one could, I've seen a good many lonesome days. Mary—" with such suddenness that Mrs. Cross was half-startled—"I've been thinking of marrying again. Do you think 'twould be foolish?"

"Why, no, I can't say I do," she answered, with a little brighter color coming into her cheeks, and something of the old thrill of twenty-five years ago in her heart.

"I'm glad of that," said the squire, delightedly. "I'm glad you don't think so. I was afraid you might. You've known me ever since we were children, and I hope you've got a good opinion of me. I ain't thought much about it until lately, but when Ruth come up after them peas 'tother day, I got to thinking it over, and says I, she'll be marrying some one, 'fore long, and then—why then I kept on thinking about it, and Ruth'll make a good wife for anybody—and I wish you'd think it over, Mary; you see, I ain't quite made up my mind yet, myself—and talk with Ruth about it, and see what she thinks."

The squire was quite flustered by this time. He began to feel really bashful again, and knew he was getting things mixed up fearfully. But he supposed she understood what he meant well enough. He noticed that she was pale, and seemed rather bewildered, but he laid it to the same emotion which made him stammer and grow red as any schoolboy asking a girl for the first time if "he might see her home."

The squire stayed to tea. He had got partially over his embarrassment by tea-time. Perhaps, seeing how his announcement affected Mrs. Cross helped to compose him. She seemed flustered enough to do for both of them, he concluded, as she passed him cream twice and gave him two heaped-up saucers of strawberries before he had eaten a single berry.

"I'll make up my mind soon," he said, when he went away. "I'll come over next week and talk with you, and you'd better talk with Ruth about it, Mary."

She sat down with her knitting and her thoughts when he was gone. So he wanted to marry Ruth, did he? He wanted a young wife. Well, she couldn't blame him for wanting some one young and fair. Perhaps it was natural for him to. He must have forgotten the old days. Perhaps he had never cared as much for her as she had for him, and—men forget more easily than women, she thought.

"What did Squire Doane want?" Ruth asked, by-and-by.

"He wanted to should talk with you," her mother answered, with a curious little quiver in her voice. She was half angry with herself for her weakness. "He thinks of marrying again, Ruth."

"I declare!" exclaimed Ruth, in great surprise. "Who to, mother? You?"

The roses came back to Mrs. Cross' cheeks for a moment.

"No," she answered, with a choking feeling in her throat. It was hard to give up a love which, after all, had perhaps never been hers, to the child who had no need of it, and for whom there was waiting other love more fitted to her youth. "He wants to marry you, Ruth."

"Me?" Ruth's face was one great exclamation point. "Me! You don't mean it, mother. Why, he's older than my father was!"

"Yes, I know that," answered her mother. "But he wanted me to talk with you about it."

"Why, I never thought of such a thing. It's ridiculous!" exclaimed Ruth. "I wouldn't marry him if I knew I'd be an old maid. You're sure you're not mistaken, mother?"

"Oh, yes," answered Mrs. Cross. "I'm sure you might do a great deal worse."

"Yes, I suppose so," answered Ruth. "He's a good man, and all that, but he's so old. You can tell him that I shall have to decline the honor he proposes to do me. Marry Squire Doane! Dear me! I never heard of anything so funny!" and Ruth laughed till she cried.

I am afraid some practical-minded, matter-of-fact people who may read this will think Mrs. Cross a foolish woman to take it to heart so, when I tell them that she cried a few quiet tears that night. But she was a woman whose heart had never lost the fragrance of its youth, as a flower keeps some hint of summer hidden in its leaves for years.

Squire Doane came over again in a few days. Ruth declared she wasn't going to stay at home to be tormented by him. No knowing what he might do when he found out that she hadn't the faintest idea of becoming Mrs. Squire Doane.

"Men can act so ridiculous, you know," she said. "You can tell him a good deal better than I can. Break the news gently to the dear man, and say I don't believe in old men's darlings," and she went off laughing.

The squire was evidently somewhat ill at ease. He fidgeted about, and looked the family Bible through from beginning to end, read of the births, deaths and marriages, and took a careful inventory of the books on the mantel-shelf.

And she was about as nervous as he was. She felt sorry for him. She was sure he would be disappointed. But he had no right to expect Ruth to look very favorably upon his suit.

At last: "Have you talked with Ruth?" burst out the squire.

"Yes, and she is opposed to it," answered Mrs. Cross, anxious to have the troublesome affair off her hands. "She says you are too old."

"Too old!" The squire faced round in some astonishment. "Why, I ain't only five years older than you are, am I?"

"No," answered the widow, "but you're thirty-five years older than she is, you know."

"Well, what if I am? What's that got to do with it, I'd like to know? I ain't going to marry her, am I?" demanded the squire, much excited.

"That's what you wanted to do, I supposed," answered Mrs. Cross. "At least that's what I understood you to mean."

"Why, Mary, what a goose!" exclaimed the squire, laughing till he was red in the face. "Marry Ruth! Good Lord! I meant you!"

Back came all the vanished roses.

"I—I thought you meant her, Stephen," she said, shyly. "I understood you so."

"Not a bit of it," answered the squire. "I want you. Can I have you?"

"Yes, if you want me," she answered, and then her face was like a bed of carnations, and then the squire kissed her as delightedly as if his years had been twenty-five instead of fifty-five.

Ruth stayed away till almost dark, to make sure of not seeing him. But when she came in there he was, and his chair was suspiciously near her mother's.

"Such a joke!" cried the squire. "Your mother's been trying to marry you and me, when I never thought of such a thing. I've explained the matter to her, and—and she says she's willing."

And her mother's face explained all the rest. "That's more like it," exclaimed Ruth, and kissed them both. "I didn't believe you wanted such a flighty thing as I am."

"But I know some one who does," cried the squire, chucking her under the chin in the exuberance of his spirits. "Charley'll be home from school next year, and I—well, I guess you know more about it, maybe, than I do."

And Ruth rather thought so, too.

A Tight Place.

BY FRANK H. CONVERSE.

"You may talk about your smart wimin," said Captain Bob Hardy, as we sat round the open fireplace of that gentleman's comfortable cottage one evening last winter, "but there's one of the smartest"—said Captain Bob, indicating with his finger his pretty and blushing wife, who sat opposite—"as there is a-going."

"Ah, Bob," said the lady, "now don't tell that story again; but Captain Bob was elaborate, and to my great delight began:

"First voyage over I made as officer with my father, in the bark 'Osprey,' from Liverpool to the coast of Afriky, with rum and gunpowder—two things that's bad enough by themselves, but come to get 'em together"—and Captain Bob shook his head impressively, unable to find a simile.

"Nellie had been with the old man ever sence she was seven years old, for her mother died when she was a baby, an' Captain Storer hadn't no particular home ashore, so Nell she took to salt water like a sea-gull."

"She was seventeen then voyage I'm speakin' of, an' she could jest handle that bark, short'nin' sail, or tackin' ship—it didn't make no manner of difference—as well as the old man himself, an' as for takin' an observation, she couldn't be beat."

"We had a kind of an ugly lot for a crew, mostly furriers, but men was scarce, an' we had to take what we could get that year."

"But, barrin' some little black looks, me an' the mate got along with 'em well enough in the rum down the channel, till we'd been out about two weeks, an' then they got pretty sassy, but we didn't know, then, that they'd managed to get down the fore-watch in the night and draw off a couple of jugs of this 'ere nigger rum—stronger than wild-fire."

"First thing out of the way that we see, I was settin' on the after house one Sunday, talkin' with Nell here; she was sewin' under a little awnin', when the ol' man called me below a minute, to ask about the ship's rock'nin'."

"I came on deck jest in time to hear Nell tell the feller at the wheel that he was off his course, an' hear another chap, who was coilin' up ropes aft, mutter:

"'Blast a woman as can't mind her own business; an' then he looked over to her, an' sed somethin' so p'ison that I didn't make but two steps from the companion-way 'fore I took him 'tween the two eyes in a way that 'stonished him."

"But 'fore I know'd it, the man to the wheel grabbed a capstan bar, an' left the bark to steer herself, an' fetched me a lick on the back of the head—I remember of seein' the men runnin' aft, an' that's the last I did remember for a time."

"This powder that was aboard, had all been stowed 'tween decks, and in fine weather we always took off the midships hatches to ventilate 'tween decks and let the sun down, so as to keep the powder dry, an' there the little casks was, piled clean up to the hatch comb'n's—a pretty ticklish sight, 'specially as with the heave of the sea, an' all some of the powder had sifted out 'tween the staves, an' laid all loose 'mongst the casks."

"As I was told afterward—for I don't s'pose she will tell it"—parenthesized Captain Bob, indicating his wife who smilingly shook her head in dissent—"when the feller left the wheel, the cap'n run out of the cabin and grabbed it, to keep the bark from broachin' to. The mate—Mr. Matherson—had been turned in, but hearin' the scurrimage, come out in his shirt an' drawers, jest in time to catch an iron belayin' pin, full an' by in the temple, an' fell like an ox on the deck."

"Well, what does Nell do, as the men come runnin' aft thinkin' they'd got charge of the bark—for it seems they had made up a week before to take her, a fellow by the name of Hartly, that had been pirate, an' I don't know what all, bein' ring-leader—but go down the after companionway, quicker'n a flash, an'

grabbin' the ol' man's revolver that hung over the desk in his state-room, she run through the fore'd cabin, out on deck, an' cockin' the revolver, she pointed it down the hatch where the powder was, and sung out:

"'Men! I'll give you while I count ten, to go 'for'ard!'—and then she began to count, 'one—two—three—four—five,' an' then stopped a minit."

"'For God's sake, Miss,' says Hartly, with his face as white as a sheet—for he see by her looks that she was in earnest—'stop! an' I'll take the men 'for'ard—I will, s'elp me—an' the men, when they see her there, didn't wait for Hartly to lead 'em, but 'fore she began to count ag'in, they run like sheep, and got into the fo'c'stle."

"The steward was an old darky, and had hid in the pantry, but come out when he see the men runnin' an' unlash'd the old man, for they had tied him with the spanker sheet) who took the wheel, while they carried me into the cabin as dead, an' unconsci'ous as a log for an hour, but finally I come to, an' the first thing I saw, as I staggered out of the cabin door, was Nell still standin', as white as a sheet, by the hatch with the revolver—Mr. Matherson dead on the gratin'—an' the ol' man at the wheel as pale as a ghost, while the men was a-whisperin' among themselves 'for'ard."

"'Luckily I had a seven-shooter, and there was a double-barreled gun in the cabin, which I gave to the captain, sending the steward to the wheel."

"The men had been drinkin' more an' more, an' was gettin' noisy, but still didn't darst to come aft, where we three held a council of war."

"'Finally, Nell says: 'I have a plan, which I think will work, if Mr. Hardy will help me,' and then in a few words told us her idea, which you'll see what it was further on."

"For we had no idea of trusting the men, if they promised never so faithful to return to duty, an' we knew, under the circumstances, that that would be the next move, an' we were right."

"'Presently Hartly came aft and said: 'We'll give in beat, and we'll go back to our duty, if you'll take the girl away from that there powder, and if you'll promise to let us go clear directly the bark gets in. You've got the whip hand of us, for you've got shootin' irons, and we hain't' (which was true), 'an' if it hadn't been for the rum we wouldn't a' got into this here mess."

"'Well, my fine fellows,' says the old man, 'I've got no confidence in your word, but you can go to your duty, an' the first look, even, I see from a man of you, I'll shoot him like a dog. Now, go to your duty.'

"We closed up the hatches, laid poor Mr. Matherson out in his bunk, the wheel was relieved, and feeling that we were between two powder mines, so to speak, we waited."

"The weather was good, for we was in the tropics; that was a point in our favor, an' we only bided our time to carry out the little woman's plan, which, for a woman, was the 'cutest thing you ever thought of."

"I watched my chance along in the first of the evening, as I walked the deck, my revolver in my breast, and it came sooner than I'd hoped for."

"Hartly's turn came to take the wheel, and as he came swaggering aft, he cast such a devilish look out of his eye that I mistrusted him more and more."

"He stood a moment or two at the wheel, and then in a surly tone he says: 'The wheel ropes 's too tight, they want slackin'."